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"COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE; OR, THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF AMERICAN LIFE,"
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"MARCUS WARLAND; OR, THE LONG MOSS SPRING," "THE BANISHED SON,"
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BIOGRAPHY

OF

MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ.

THERE are few, among the many beautiful villages of New England, more romantic than that of Lancaster, Mass., where, at the breaking out of the War of 1812, dwelt the family of the late Col. John Whiting. Himself a man of high mental cultivation and great literary tastes, and described as "of a fine military figure and commanding height"—his children inherited both his personal and mental attractions; but none more largely than his youngest child, *Caroline Lee Whiting*, the subject of this sketch. Even at this time, a girl of ten or eleven years, she was at once distinguished among her school-mates by the remarkable genius she already displayed, and endeared to them by her winning manners, sweet disposition, and warmth of heart. Her compositions, sparkling with fancy, glowing with feeling, and mature in language, were thus early the admiration of her companions and the pride of the home circle; and not few were the auguries of the future novelist.

But the summons which roused the country to

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arms, and the long struggle which followed, added another and an important element to the influences which moulded her opening character. Col. Whiting had been dead nearly two years: but his eldest son, Henry, had for four years followed in his footsteps; and now his younger brothers entered upon the profession of their father. Too far removed from the scenes of war, and spared a personal cause of mourning, their sister realized little of its darker side: while a personal interest made its history an exciting reality to all the family of the absent soldiers. The events, therefore, which proved the sons worthy to tread in their father's steps,* gave to the character of Caroline

* The military record of this family is as remarkable in itself, as it is honorable to them. The following are the data of the War Department.

John Whiting, Commissioned Lieut. Col. 4th Regt. U. S. Infantry, July 8th, 1808; Adjutant and Inspector of the Army, July 17th, 1809; Colonel 5th Regiment Infantry, Dec. 31st, 1809. Died, Washington, D. C., Sept. 3d, 1810.

Henry Whiting, (son of the latter), appointed Cornet Light Dragoons, Oct. 20th, 1808; 2d Lieut., Sept., 1809; 1st Lieut., Aug., 1811; Aid-de-Camp to 1st Brig. Gen. Boyd, and distinguished in the capture of Fort George, U. C., May 27th, 1813; Capt. 4th Regt. of Rifles, March, 1814; (which he declined); Brevet Captain, "for meritorious services," March 17th, 1814; retained (at the reduction of the Army), May, 1815, in 5th Regt. Infantry; Aid-de-Camp to Maj. Gen. Macomb, May, 1815; Capt., March, 1817; retained as Captain 1st Regt. Artillery, May, 1821; Brevet Major, "for ten years faithful service," March 17th, 1824; Brevet Lieut. Col., "for faithful and meritorious service," June 30th, 1834; Quarter Master, with rank of Major, Feb. 23d, 1835; Dep. Quarter-Master General, with rank of Lieut. Col., July 7th, 1838; Ass't. Quarter-Master

the tone and strong patriotism which have since been so characteristic of her writings. The impressions also made upon her by the romantic beauty of the scenery around her native place, were no less vivid and lasting. A spirit originally highly æsthetic was developed with every ramble in the woods, and every hour spent in musing and building airy castles by the murmuring stream. Love of the beauty in nature became enthusiasm; the flowers, which smiled at her approach, and the birds, whose song welcomed her, when she threw herself upon the mossy roots of an

General, with rank of Colonel, April 21st, 1846; joined Gen. Taylor's Command in Mexico, as Acting Quarter-Master General, July 6th, 1846; Brevet Brig. Gen'l., "for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battle of Buena Vista," Feb. 23d, 1847. Died in St. Louis, Sept. 16th, 1857.

Tobias Whiting, (son of Col. John Whiting), commissioned 2d Lieut. 1st Reg't. Artillery, Feb. 10th, 1812; 1st Lieut., June, 1813; Aid-de-Camp to Brig. Gen. Chandler, 1814; retained (at the reduction of the Army) May, 1815, in the Artillery; Captain, Sept., 1819; Instructor of Artillery, Military Academy, West Point, Aug. 1820 to 1821; Brevet Major "for ten years faithful service," Sept. 10th, 1829. Died at Lancaster, Mass., May 16th, 1842.

Levi Whiting, (son of Col. John Whiting), commissioned 2d Lieut. Artillery, Feb. 10th, 1812; 1st Lieut., June, 1814; retained (at the reduction of the Army), May, 1815, in the Artillery; Captain 4th Reg. Artillery, May 21st, 1822; Brevet Major, "for ten years faithful service," May 21st, 1832; Major 1st Reg. Artillery, March 19th, 1842; Lieut. Col. 1st Reg. Artillery, April 1st, 1850. Died at Naugatuck, Conn., Aug. 3d, 1852.

Henry M. Whiting, (son of Gen. Henry Whiting), Cadet, Sept., 1838; 2d Lieut. 4th Reg. Artillery, July 1st, 1842; Brevet 1st Lieut. for gallant and meritorious conduct in Battle of Buena Vista, Feb. 23d, 1847. Died at Fort Brown, Texas, 1853.

old forest tree, were her familiars, and old Monadnoc, a peak which stands ruggedly forth among the range of mountains on the borders of New Hampshire, was to her indeed "a kingly spirit throned among the hills."

In such a heart, the influence of religious associations take early and deep root; and the transcript of that heart, as it was at this period, is evidence that they had given an elevated and a healthy tone to a character which otherwise had been in great danger of becoming morbid and unfitted for domestic life. From this early day do we perceive the hallowing and subduing influence of an unaffected trust in a heavenly Father, and an appreciation of the realities of life, which have ever preserved the true woman, amid the attractions of a literary career.

On the 30th of September, 1824, Miss Whiting was married to Mr. N. M. Hentz, a French gentleman of highly cultivated mind and varied talents, whose father, Nicholas Hentz, a lawyer of Metz, was a member of the French National Convention, and whose own devotion to the natural sciences, particularly to that of Entomology, is well known in that department. He was at this time associated with Mr. Bancroft, the historian, in conducting a Seminary at Round Hill, Northampton. In this place they resided nearly two years, when Mr. Hentz, having been elected to the post of Professor of Belles Lettres and Modern Languages in Chapel Hill College, N. C., they removed to the South, and resided

for years in the congenial atmosphere that surrounded this seat of learning.

In this, their southern home, was added to Mrs. Hentz, the sacred trust of a Mother; and the claims of dependent infancy and childhood, almost entirely and of necessity debarred attention to those of literature.

In the year 1830, Mr. Hentz was induced by some gentlemen, who wished to establish a Select Seminary under his superintendence and that of Mrs. Hentz conjointly, to remove to Covington, Kentucky, from whence, the second year after, they crossed the river and took charge of a similar institution in Cincinnati.

Heretofore Mrs. Hentz's literary efforts had been confined to a limited field: in fact, with the exception of an occasional poem or sketch, which had found its way into a newspaper or magazine, they had been altogether private. Her portfolio was filled with the overflowings of her fertile pen—but it was to her sufficient to have been the muse and the historiographer of the family; and she had been more intent upon the cultivation of her own mind than upon gaining for herself a wider appreciation than that of the immediate circle in which she personally moved.

But, in Cincinnati, she was at once surrounded by appreciating friends; and as a member of a highly intellectual coterie, mingled more than ever before in literary enjoyments and pursuits. She was thus gradually induced to appear more prominently in those walks to which she afterwards became so bright

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an ornament; and from this period is to be dated her rising reputation as an author.

Their stay in Cincinnati was of less than two years duration, yet such was the fostering effect of an atmosphere more congenial than any she ever afterward enjoyed, that, although engaged in school duties during all her stay in this city, her industry and quickened powers accomplished what to most writers would have been the work of years; and some of her writings of this time, if not those which have given Mrs. Hentz her widest reputation, are perhaps those which will secure it longest continuance.

About this time a prize of \$500 was offered, by Mr. Pelby of the Boston Theatre, for the best original tragedy, founded upon the conquest of the Moors in Spain. Mrs. Hentz entering the lists with *De Lara*, the first dramatic effort of her maturer years, was the successful competitor; and this was followed by two compositions of a similar character, *Lamora*, a tragedy of Indian frontier life; and *Constance of Werdenberg*, a Dramatic Poem, the scene of which was laid in Switzerland during the struggle for freedom. Mr. Pelby, having become unable, from business difficulties, to pay the award due the author, honorably restored to her the copyright of *De Lara*. This tragedy was subsequently published in book form, but the other two, with the exception of the limited circulation of a Georgia newspaper, were never given to the public.

In the year 1834, Mr. Hentz and his family re-

moved to Florence, a secluded town upon the Tennessee River, in North Alabama; and here, absorbed in family and in school duties, occupied with the care of four small children, the youngest but an infant at the time of their removal to this place, and surrounded by a circle of attached pupils, Mrs. Hentz, for nearly nine years, retired almost entirely from public notice, and passed, probably, the most domestic portion of her life. At no previous period, since her marriage, had her academic duties been so confining, or her family demanded so much of her time, her thoughts, and her feelings; and during her entire residence in Florence, no work of any length was composed by her. Fugitive poems, hurriedly written as occasion called for or suggested them, are the only product of her pen during this long interval of her auctorial career.

But Mrs. Hentz could not so entirely elude the notice of appreciative minds, and in the year 1843, they were induced, through the influence of literary friends, to remove from Florence, and take charge of a flourishing Seminary in Tuscaloosa. This city, at that time, not only the seat of the University of Alabama, but also the capital of the State, was the centre of much intellectual influence, and possessed of much literary society; and thus surrounded, Mrs. Hentz was induced to resume her long-neglected pen, a pleasure now permitted more freely by lightened domestic cares.

It was at this period that the writer first formed,

as an inmate of Mrs. Hentz's family, an affectionate friendship which the lapse of years and a separation, but rarely interrupted either by personal intercourse or correspondence, have only warmed and heightened. He remembers her now most distinctly as he knew her then—moving among a numerous throng of devoted school girls, commanding the respect, as she won the affectionate esteem, of those who were her assistants in the labors of instruction, as well as of those who were committed to her care—as the light and centre of a united family; and only as an author when an hour found at her disposal between other duties, or snatched from the watches of the night, was pressed into service for the purpose.

AUNT PATTY'S SCRAP BAG, written during a school vacation in 1844, for the Philadelphia Saturday Courier, was Mrs. Hentz's first return to more extended composition, and the only work of the kind written at this time.

On their removal from Tuskaloosa, in Dec., 1845, Mrs. Hentz left behind her a more generally congenial society than she ever afterward enjoyed, although a visit in Mobile, on the journey to Tuskegee, Alabama—their next home—was a brief, but bright episode in her life.

In the literary history of Mrs. Hentz, Tuskegee—a small place, a *village* in fact, scarce rescued from the relics of Indian struggles at this time—has no place; it was chiefly made memorable, by the arrival of the time when the family circle was first broken up by the

departure of a son, to pursue his studies in a professional school, and by the marriage of her eldest daughter. Another removal, however, to Columbus, Ga., early in 1848, enlarged her sphere of usefulness, and induced her again to resume her pen in the intervals between the engrossing duties of the Academy. *LINDA, OR THE YOUNG PILOT OF THE BELLE CREOLE*; and *RENA, OR THE SNOW BIRD*—were the first of a series of domestic novels which have given the widest spread to Mrs. Hentz's reputation, were written during this and the following year.

For four years Columbus continued the home, but was at the same time the scene of many changes in Mrs. Hentz's domestic life, as it was of a considerable extension of her literary achievements. Her own long illness, and a total failure of Mr. Hentz's health from which he never recovered, occasioned them to relinquish further attention to the Seminary, which had been under their charge but little more than a year. From the period of her own recovery—with the exception of the spring of 1850, during which Mrs. Hentz sustained alone the cares of a select school—her time was chiefly devoted to writing, now not merely as a recreation but as a reliance. Her success is well known, as it was confidently anticipated by her friends. *RENA, OR THE SNOW BIRD*, was succeeded by *MARCUS WARLAND, OR THE LONG MOSS SPRING*; and *EOLINE, OR MAGNOLIA VALE*; written in 1851, at the bedside and amid the exhausting cares of attending her husband through the

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most distressing period of a prostrating nervous disease.

In the spring of the year following, 1852, Mr. and Mrs. Hentz were persuaded to join their elder children, who were now settled in Florida, among whom they henceforth made their home. The winter and spring of 1853-4 were brightened to her by a visit to the scenes of her childhood and to the few remaining members of her family, but otherwise, bowed by affliction in sickness and death—the loss successively, soon after her removal from Columbus, of two brothers and a sister—these last four years of her life were toilsomely divided between unremitted devotion to the duties of a wife and a mother, and her labors with her pen.

HELEN AND ARTHUR, OR MISS THUSA'S SPINNING WHEEL was written in 1852; and in this and the year following, THE PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE. The publication of this latter, her largest work, was, however, delayed until 1854. To these was added ROBERT GRAHAM, A SEQUEL TO LINDA, OR THE YOUNG PILOT OF THE BELLE CREOLE; written during the winter of 1854-5, after her return from New England.

Within the above three years Mrs. Hentz had also prepared for publication four volumes, containing all of her earlier tales which she wished preserved, which volumes are published under the titles of "THE LOST DAUGHTER," "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE," "THE BANISHED SON," and "LOVE AFTER

MARRIAGE," and also conducted in a large measure the literary department of the "Columbus Sentinel."

The year 1855 was mostly passed at St. Andrew's Bay, Fla., in the hope that the sea air might be beneficial to Mr. Hentz. During the summer, however, leaving him with their daughter, she paid a visit to her eldest son, Dr. Charles A. Hentz, in Marianna, where she wrote her last novel, ERNEST LINWOOD, and immediately on its completion forwarding it to her publisher, without any respite of mind or body, she returned to her post at St. Andrew's. All that bleak winter, which will be remembered on the Gulf coast as well as on the Canadian frontier, she was devoted to her sick husband, who, suffering more from a nervous than from any organic disease, needed her unremitting attention, often nights as well as days. In these night watches the attacks of an insidious enemy, which was not yet suspected, were made upon her constitution.

In January, 1856, it being designed to return to Marianna, she preceded Mr. Hentz, to prepare for his coming, and reached Dr. Hentz's home in that place on the 31st. A severe cold caught upon the journey, fastened itself upon her exhausted system. On Feb. 6th she completed and mailed to Mr. Ballou, of Boston, the last production of her pen—*No Cross, no Crown*. That very day she was seized with what proved to be masked pneumonia, though its symptoms did not reveal themselves until the 10th. The most vigorous treatment was unavailing, and on Mon-

day night, Feb. 11, 1856, "she passed gently, sweetly away." It seemed almost prophetic, that in a letter to the writer, bearing date but a few days before her death, in speaking of the frequent insincerity between even the best friends, occurs this passage. "We pass through the world with veiled hearts and muffled tongues, and we speak of what we care not and conceal what we really do care about, till we grow cold and artificial, and by and by the night comes, the shadows fall, and there is no time for confidence or truth."

Mr. Hentz survived his wife but eight months, and they both rest together in the grave-yard of the Episcopal Church in Marianna.

Mrs. Hentz was gifted with a ready and fertile pen. Her numerous tales, of very different degrees of merit, dating from periods scattered over the whole of her married life, and written for various newspapers and magazines, have enjoyed the highest reputation in that class of literature; among them, *The Mob Cap*, *The Pedler*, a *Sequel to the Mob Cap*, *The Pet Beauty*, *The Fortunes of a Young Physician*, *The Two Sisters* and *The Two Uncles*, *The Beauty Transformed*, *The Drunkard's Daughter*, *Father Hilario*, *the Catholic*, *The Tempted*, *Aunt Mercy*, *The Village Pastor's Wife*, *Thanksgiving Day*, and *the Stranger at the Banquet*, are all contained in a volume issued under the title of "COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE, OR THE JOYS AND SORROWS OF AMERICAN LIFE;" *Aunt Patty's Scrap Bag*, *The Lost Daughter*, *The Maiden of Judea*, *The Pea-Green Tuffeta*, *The*

Purple Satin Dress, The Velvet Bodlice, The Snow Flakes, The Soldier's Bride, De Lara's Bride, and the Premature Declaration of Love, are all contained in a volume entitled "THE LOST DAUGHTER, AND OTHER STORIES OF THE HEART;" *Wild Jack, or The Stolen Child, The Banished Son, Bell and Rose, The Little Broom Boy, Selim, an Oriental Tale, Howard, the Apprentice Boy, The Black Mask, a Tale of the Land of Flowers, Magnolia Leaves, The Paradise of the Dead, The Sex of the Soul, and a Trip to the Bay*, are all contained in a volume entitled "THE BANISHED SON, AND OTHER STORIES;" *The Bosom Serpent, Love After Marriage, The Victim of Excitement, The Blind Girl's Story, The Parlour Serpent, The Shaker Girl, A Rainy Evening, Three Scenes in the Life of a Belle, The Fatal Cosmetic, The Abyssinnian Neophyte, The Village Anthem, My Grandmother's Bracelet, and The Mysterious Reticule*, are all contained in a volume entitled "LOVE AFTER MARRIAGE, AND OTHER STORIES."

It is, however, through her larger novels—eight in number—and with the exception of *AUNT PATTY'S SCRAP BAG, AND THE MOB CAP*, written during the last eight years of her life, that she is most widely and most favorably known. With Mrs. Hentz's prose works, therefore, at least with all of them which she would wish to be preserved, the public are in possession; and it is as a prose writer that she is ranked among the first Female Authors of America.

What Mrs. Hentz has been as an author, and what henceforth is to be her rank in the annals of Ameri-

can literature, the public will decide; affection will scarcely be esteemed an impartial judge. But those only who *knew* her, and to all such was she dear, are in possession of the materials upon which to base a judgment of her talents or her genius. The position attained by many of those with whom she might be brought into comparison, has been due in no small part to the avoidance or the neglect of domestic duties and cares. Mrs. Hentz's brightest honor is awarded her by those who knew her as a Mother, Wife, and Friend, and what she has accomplished has been based upon the cultivation of her youth, and the diligent employment of such scattered opportunities as were afforded amid more important duties. Never for a moment was the true woman sacrificed to the author; and therefore so far from living in an ideal world of her own bright creation, she lived in a practical and real world which her smile and her love made bright for others as well as for herself, and which gave to her writings their chief attraction by shedding upon them the *real* light of life. It was in accordance with these habits of mind, that she drew portraitures to no small extent, from place, person and incident; and her friends recognize the scene of her own childhood in the early chapters of the *PLANTER'S NORTHERN BRIDE*; the spirit which presided at her own fireside in *AUNT PATTY'S SCRAP BAG*; and so vividly has she portrayed, in the character and childhood of Gabriella Lynn, in *ERNEST LINWOOD*, what all have felt must have been the *inner*

life of the author, that one is almost tempted in the story also to seek for a resemblance which has no existence.

The *currente calamo*, in Mrs. Hentz's instance, was no myth. Her pen glided over the page, hurrying to keep pace with the flow of her glowing thoughts, and impressing every thing with an ease and freshness which were most genuine. Sheet after sheet was pushed from her, to a group of friends perhaps, or to her children, who sat by her reading them, as the unborn thoughts took being; and the writer has seen many of her sweetest poems, and still possesses some, in their first rough draft, sent forth on their little mission, neither having nor needing the slightest correction.

Although *De Lara* proves the powers of Mrs. Hentz in the field of tragic paths to be of a high stamp, it was domestic life that she loved most to sketch; and while her fidelity to true heart-history and her radiant fancy were, each in its own way, the chief attractions of her tales, every page was purified by an exalted moral, true and hallowed by a Christian spirit. She had received many and varied gifts from the hand of Providence. As such she recognized them even from childhood. A deep realization of the presence of a God in all the affairs of man is visible in her earliest writings; and from the time, during her residence in Florence, when together with her husband she assumed the discipleship of her Saviour, her life was one earnest effort to render unto God, not in one de-

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partment alone, but for *all* His gifts, "His own with usury." Year by year, gratitude and sorrow alike drew her nearer and nearer to Him in whose faith at last she trustingly lay down to rest after the burden of the day was forever passed. Not a few who have never known her, have and shall mingle with their admiration, grateful and loving thoughts, while those who were privileged to know her well, especially those who in early years were brought under her influence and felt her affection, shall, with her children "rise up, and call her blessed."

LINDA;

OR, THE

YOUNG PILOT OF THE BELLE CREOLE.

CHAPTER I.

LINDA WALTON, at eight years of age, was the most spoiled, petted, warm-hearted, impulsive, generous little tyrant that ever ruled over a Southern plantation. Her mother, a lovely, gentle, pious woman, was the only being that could bend her strong will, direct her wild impulses, and counteract, as far as possible, by firm, yet mild discipline, the baneful effect of her father's excessive indulgence. Little Linda had the misfortune to be a great heiress, for her grandfather, who resided in Louisiana, had bequeathed her a large plantation in one of those rich, luxuriant plains on the banks of the Mississippi, which are fertile as the borders of the Nile, with an hundred and fifty negroes, to convert, by their labour, the cotton, sugar, and rice into accumulating gold. But a far greater, deeper misfortune befell her, about one year previous to the period we have chosen to present our young heiress to the reader. That lovely, gentle, pious mother, who exercised such holy influence on the mind and heart of her child, was taken from her by death, and Linda was left to the guardianship of a father,

whose days were passed in superintending his cotton and his negroes, and whose evening amusement it was to pet and caress the little orphan, whose beauty and quick intelligence were his pride and delight. But the prime minister of the household was Aunt Judy, her nurse, since promoted to the rank of housekeeper. Linda had loved her mother as few children of her age can love, and her grief at her death was so wild and extraordinary that the negroes regarded her for a time with superstitious terror. The child, who, in the fearlessness of her sorrow, would go and sit for hours on her mother's grave, was an enigma they could not solve. Mrs. Walton had kept Linda so constantly under her own surveillance, forbidding in her presence those awful stories of ghosts and phantoms that so often freeze the young blood, and palsy the bounding limbs of childhood, that Linda had never yet been led, by the hand of ignorance, into the dark regions of the spirit-land. She remembered her mother's face, as if it had been the face of an angel, such as she had last seen it, so white, so pure, with that sweet glimmering smile death leaves on the lineaments of human loveliness. For a while, this holy presence was with her during the long day, and in the dreams of night. She was afraid to be passionate and rebellious, lest that sweet, sad smile should vanish from those pale lips. But if time effaces the characters engraven on the granite surface of man's heart, how much sooner will it sweep over those prints traced in sand—the impressions of childhood? A little while, the angel-face came not near her in the sunshine of day, but when the shadows of night deepened round her, it would bend meekly over her and seem to listen to her evening prayer. A little longer, and Linda learned to revel in the joy of independence, to issue her little imperious command; sure no mild voice would reprove, no gentle hand restrain, and she tried to forget the mother, who, had she lived, would have rebuked her waywardness and controlled

her will. But no matter how self-willed Linda might be, let Aunt Judy but bind up her head with jimson leaves, and say she felt "mighty poorly," she would glide noiselessly round her, hang tenderly on her sable neck, or pat her dark cheeks with her velvet hands. Sickness and sorrow were sacred things to her—and passion and pride subsided in their presence. Such was Linda at eight years old, such were the influences that acted on her childhood.

One evening Mr. Walton seemed more thoughtful than usual. He ate his supper in silence, took Linda upon his knee, and watched with ominous interest the motions of Judy, who always presided with aristocratic dignity over the ablutions of the tea-cups, having two young negroes under her especial training, who treated her with most deferential respect, though they rolled their black eyes and showed their white teeth metaphorically behind her back. It was evident from Aunt Judy's air and style of dress, that she belonged to the *ancient regime*, the class of family servants who are admitted into the confidence of their master's household and are treated with kindness and affectionate familiarity. She always wore a stiff white turban coiled round her head, in the fashion of a cornucopia—a nice, starched, checked apron, and carried a white napkin suspended over her left arm. Her African blood had not been corrupted by the base mingling of a paler stream. Black as ebony was her smooth and shining skin, on which the dazzling ivory of her teeth threw gleams bright as the moon on midnight. Judy had loved her gentle mistress: nay, more than loved—adored, revered her, as a being of a superior, holier race than her own. She mourned her death with the most unaffected grief, though she said it was a sin in her to mourn after her, for "mistress had appeared to her, the night after she died, with beautiful shining wings on her back, and told her she was gone to heaven, and that she must come and meet her there."

Sincere and lasting as was the sorrow of Judy, she derived great satisfaction from the household dignity with which she was invested. In the morning, her white turban was seen shooting with meteoric swiftness from room to room, while a little negro trotted behind her, jingling a basket of keys, and Linda, like a stray sunbeam, played round and about them, the pet and darling of all.

This evening Judy knew, by a kind of intuition, that there was something on her master's mind that he wished to communicate. The manner in which he glanced into the fire—oh ! the glorious light-wood blaze !—how it illuminates every nook and corner of the room !—what comfort and beauty and radiance it imparts to the cool, autumnal nights, while through the open windows steals the mild fragrance of departing summer ! The rays from the silver candelabras, the glittering chandeliers, are pale and cold to the effulgence of the light wood fire. It is the glory of the South. By this the dark cabin of the negro is lighted up as gorgeously as the halls of his master ; and with one of these magnificent torches, he can thread the thick labyrinths of the pine forests with unerring footstep. What lonely traveller ever passed near the Southern planter's habitation, in the darkness of night, that did not bless the hospitable beacon blaze that sunned the shadows of his path ? Those tall posts, with three spreading feet, like the tripod of the Grecian Pythoness, surmounted by burning pine-knots, placed here and there in the spacious yard, seen through the tall, cone-shaped trees, are so many brilliant stars, cheering the forest gloom.

"Linda," said Mr. Walton, "would you not like to have a new mother ?"

"A new mother !" repeated Linda, fixing her large, brown eyes in unutterable wonder on his face. "Where is she going to come from ?"

"There is a very nice lady, who lives somewhere on this

river, who says she is willing to be a kind mother to you, and I hope you will love her very much, and be a very good, quiet, and obedient little girl."

"When is she coming? How big is she? Does she look like my own dear mamma?" cried Linda, out of breath with wonder and curiosity.

Judy gave Minta such a sudden twitch of the ear, that the cup she was wiping dropped from her hand and dashed to pieces on the floor. It was fortunate that Judy found a legitimate channel in which her wrath could find vent, for the idea of a new mistress, who might deprive her of all her household honours, was hateful to her. She gave the unfortunate delinquent several smart slaps on either side of the head, muttering between each blow—

"You good for nothing, no account nigger; go long into the kitchen this minute. New mistress, sure enough. Well, well, old Judy's tired enough toting the keys from morning till night. 'Spose master thinks she not take care of things—no treat Miss Linda proper enough. Oh, dear, dear—the Lord have mercy on us! Poor, dear mistress! When she come with her beautiful spread-out wings and told me to meet her in heaven, I didn't 'spect—oh dear!"

Here the faithful creature, as if impressed with a presentiment of the evils which would follow the stranger's advent, bowed her head in her lap, and rocking to and fro, began to weep bitterly.

Linda slid with lightning rapidity from her father's arms, and buried her head in the lap of her nurse.

"I won't have a new mamma," cried she. "Pa shan' bring her here. I won't have an ugly, old woman, instead of my sweet, pretty mamma. I won't be a good girl; I won't mind her; that I won't."

"Linda," said Mr. Walton, "you must not talk in that way, or I shall not love you any more; and Judy, it is very

wrong in you to talk so before the child. I'm not at all dissatisfied with your services. I know you are faithful and honest, and do all you can for Linda and myself; but if I choose to get me a wife, you have neither of you a right to dictate. It is for Linda's good, and for the good of the household. She is a lady of fortune, a widow, with one son—"

"A son!" exclaimed Linda, lifting her head; "how big is he?"

"Oh, he is a big boy of thirteen or fourteen, who will be a brother to you, and teach you how to ride on the poney, and hunt squirrels in the wood."

Linda smiled through her tears, but Judy groaned louder than ever at the idea of the big boy, whose muddy shoes were going to track her shining waxed floor, and litter her clean-swept yard.

"I shall leave home to-morrow," continued Mr. Walton, "and I expect to find every thing in the best order on my return. Judy, see that your finest linen and whitest counterpanes are brought into service. Have a plenty of nice cakes and pies prepared, and dress my little girl in her prettiest. I know she wants her new brother to love her, and she will be a good girl for my sake."

Mr. Walton was one of those easy, good-natured men, whose equilibrium was never disturbed by the impulses of passion, and whose will was easily swayed by the will of others. Conscious of the extreme flexibility of his character, and fearing opposition exactly where he had met it, he had taken the precaution to arrange every thing before mentioning the subject, so that it would be impossible for him to recede with honour. The lady who had been recommended to him was very wealthy, had the reputation of being one of the best managers in the country, raised the most cotton, had the best disciplined negroes, was a doting mother to her own only son,

and consequently must be a tender one to his only orphan daughter.

Mr. Walten's affairs were getting into disorder,—his overseer was inefficient, his negroes becoming idle and unruly, Linda terribly spoiled, and Judy growing entirely too consequential. The lady in question would remedy all these evils. Her feminine but powerful influence would harmonize every jarring element, and his days would glide away in tranquil happiness.

Linda, with the quick-changing feelings of childhood, began to think with pleasure of her new brother, and plan many excursions in which he was to be her protector and guide. She was sorry he was so old and so big; but then he could wait upon her better, and carry her over the brooklets, and climb the trees for her, to get nuts and fruit. The image of a new mother, too, softened down into something that she longed to love. Notwithstanding her passionate assertion that she would not be good, she made an inward resolution that she would be so, for her strong affections yearned for more objects on which to shed their living warmth.

Judy, too, finding the evil inevitable, endeavoured to cultivate the grace of submission. She unlocked the store of snowy white linen, spread out the finest counterpanes, brightened up the family silver, and made most remarkable preparations for a wedding feast. There was a perfect tempest in the kitchen among the rolling pins and beating sticks, a deadly massacre in the poultry yard. The little negroes were poking their woolly heads into the crannies and hollows after eggs, and Linda, in spite of Judy's remonstrances and prophecies that she would get sunburned and freckled, would be the first in every nest, no matter where it might be situated. At length all was ready. The floor shone like mirrors in their waxen varnish, through which their rich, dark veins traced bold and graceful figures, resembling the finest ara-

besque; white curtains were tastefully festooned each side of the windows, showing the delicate leaf-work of the vines that clambered round the frames; green, odoriferous pine-boughs filled the chimneys, though at night to be displaced by the blazing knot; vases of flowers ornamented the mantel-pieces and tables, and even the shelf in the passage, where the brass-bound bucket, with its silver-chased cocoa-nut shell-gourd, was always placed, was adorned in the same floral manner. The negroes, in their holiday dresses, were standing on logs or perched on the fence, watching their master's coming. Aunt Judy's white turban assumed its most majestic peak, and a pair of large, gold ear-rings and a massy finger-ring added to the aristocracy of her appearance. She had arrayed Linda in her prettiest white muslin dress and pantalettes, brushed her short, curly brown locks, till they were as bright and smooth as satin, and "blessed her little heart" a thousand times over. That little heart was throbbing with the most intense emotion. She began to conceive a great awe for the being for whom such splendid preparations had been making. She felt unhappy at her own insignificance. She was dwindling away into a mere mote in comparison with this great lady and her fourteen-year-old boy. She was afraid they would not love her; that her father would not love her any more. Even Aunt Judy would not care so much about her as she had done. Oh, she intended to be very good, and steal like a sweet doveling into the downy nests of their inmost hearts.

With such thoughts as these swelling and softening her young bosom, the little girl gazed down through the avenue of trees that led to the house, trying to catch the sound of the carriage wheels, to be the first to announce the coming of the travellers. Her cheeks were pale, her eyes moist. She clung to Aunt Judy's hand as if afraid to let her go. Was it instinct that led her to nestle closer to that humble friend,

at this moment, when all the happiness of her future life was at stake?

"There they come—there they come!" she exclaimed. "Don't you see the horses? and don't you hear the wheels hum?"

Aunt Judy smoothed down her apron, and leading Linda to the gate, she arranged the negroes in a row on each side, through which the master and mistress were to pass. Minta and Dilsy, her two handmaids, stood next to herself and Linda, grinning from ear to ear.

The carriage rolled up to the gate, and Mr. Walton, alighting, assisted his bride to descend. She was dressed in a plain, lead-coloured silk, a neat white bonnet and great veil. Her figure was good, but her features, being screened by the veil, could not be distinguished.

"Robert, my darling, take care—you are treading on my dress."

This was addressed, in very soft, tender accents, to a tall, rough-looking, but handsome boy, who bounced out of the carriage before his mother had placed her foot on the ground, shoving her unceremoniously on one side, and stamping his feet with violence, to wake them up, he said.

Judy folded her hands over her waist, and dropped several deep curtsies.

"Welcome home, mistress. Hope to see you very well, mistress."

The lady made a little nod, but said nothing.

"This is my daughter, my little Linda," said Mr. Walton, taking Linda's trembling hand, and drawing her towards him. "Linda, this is your new mamma; you must be a good girl, and she will love you very much."

The lady stooped down, kissed her through her veil, said she "was very fond of good little girls," and the new mistress passed under the shadow of the oak trees that hung over the

piazza, crossed the threshold, and entered the mansion where she was henceforth to preside, for weal or for wo.

The young Robert was obliged to give vent to his superfluous activity, after being pent up so long in the limits of a carriage, before he could submit to any in-door restraints. He pulled the woolly locks of Judy's handmaids elect, till they screamed, swung Linda half a dozen times round him in the air, then laughed to see her fall from dizziness, set the dogs after the geese, and the cat after the dogs,—making more commotion in three minutes than a well-bred youth would in so many years. Judy tried in vain to keep down her hot African blood.

"Never mind ! never mind !" muttered she, brushing the dirt from Linda's muslin frock, and smoothing her disordered ringlets. "New mistress, sure enough ; new master, too ; one master plenty. Knock her down, he'll eat green persimmons for his supper."

Linda dared not open her lips. She was terrified by his violence as much as she was disgusted by his rudeness. Her spirit quailed before his bold, wicked-looking, black eyes, and the love which had been welling forth to meet this brother, companion, protector, flowed back to the fountain. She walked slowly into the house, curious to see the face of the strange lady, whom her father had married.

Mrs. Walton stood by the window watching the gambols of her son, so absorbed in the contemplation she noticed not the entrance of the child, who gazed so earnestly and wistfully on her. Could the little step-daughter read the tablet of that smooth, cold countenance ? It required greater skill in physiognomy than Linda possessed, but she had an intuitive perception of character, and there was something in those thin, compressed lips, pale blue eyes, with almost white eyelashes and brows, that struck her very chillingly. She had the shining forehead, caused by the tight-drawn skin ; sandy hair,

parted with elaborate precision ; and her light eye-brows were strained into a high arch, as if trying to remove as far as possible from the stony, passionless orbs below. Linda looked and wondered what made her father love such a woman. He was so handsome himself, and her mother was so lovely. She did not know, foolish child, how little love had to do with this eligible second marriage,—this marriage of recommendation and convenience—of policy and prudence.

“Oh, I shall never love her !” whispered Linda’s sinking heart ; “and she will never love me. And there will be no use in my trying to be good.” She turned a reproachful glance at her father, thinking she could not love him half as well as before ; but he looked so kindly and affectionately at her, and opened his arms so lovingly, that she rushed into them, and burying her head in his bosom, cried and sobbed aloud.

“What makes her cry ?” said Mrs. Walton, in that soft, peculiar voice which startled one, from its want of harmony with her face. “I hope she is not afraid of me. Robert, dear,” continued she, putting her head out of the window, “don’t exercise quite so much. It will make you sick. Don’t, Robert, make quite so much noise. Dear fellow !” turning with a smile to Mr. Walton, “he is so full of life and spirit, he does not know what to do. He has been still so long, too. You will get accustomed to his little sportive ways, I trust.”

“Oh, boys will be boys,” said he, with a slight embarrassment of manner. “But you must not think my little girl is crying from fear of you. She’s tired and excited, and over glad to see me. That is all. You will find her a good deal spoiled, but her heart is in the right place. Win that and you can do any thing in the world with her.”

“I have no doubt we shall be good friends by and by,” said Mrs. Walton. “We must give her time to get acquainted.”

Who ever heard of children's wanting time to get acquainted? The spark darts not more instantaneously along the electric chain than the glance of affection into the heart of a child. Time!—the heart of a young child is full, brimming with love. Give it an outlet, and it gushes forth a crystal stream, carrying freshness and beauty wherever it flows.

Had the step-mother only laid her hand gently on the drooping head, imprinted one kind kiss on the moist cheek of Linda, the child would have loved her, in spite of her chilling exterior; but no kiss or caress was proffered, and Linda only clung closer to her father's bosom, assured that he loved her still, and would continue to love her.

When supper was announced, Master Robert came in with a thundering noise, scraping his shoes, not on the nice mat by the threshold, but on the bright floor.

"Please, young master," said Judy, almost choking with suppressed anger, "please wipe your shoes on the mat."

"Hold your tongue, old unicorn!" he exclaimed, shuffling as hard as he could. "If you don't mind what you say, I'll smash that tower on the top of your head as flat as a pancake. And you, you great goggle eyes," said he, turning to Minta, who, at a signal from Juda, was following him on all-fours, wiping his tracks with a tremendous flourish of the house-cloth, "if you don't stop chasing me with that old rag, I'll make you see through the back of your skull."

"Robert," ejaculated the soft voice of his mother, "don't speak *quite* so loud; and come to supper, my dear. You must be hungry by this time."

Robert obeyed the summons with alacrity, and was the first to seat himself at a table literally covered with dainties. Linda, who had been taught by her mother that there was nothing so disgusting as gluttony and ill-breeding at table, and that young persons should always wait modestly till elder ones were served, instead of calling upon the servants to wait

upon them first, witnessed with indignant astonishment the behaviour of Robert. He ordered the servants here and there in the most insolent manner, when they were waiting on others; filled his plate with cake, waffles, wafers, sweetmeats, and meat, at the same time scattering crumbs over the white table-cover, and spilling his coffee every time he carried it to his mouth.

"Here, give me some more sugar, possum," cried he to Dilsy, having christened her already with that charming nickname. "What sort of slop do you call this?" Then filling his cup half full of loaf sugar, he declared it was not fit to drink, and pushing it back so suddenly that the contents flew into the preserve dishes and butter plates, he called for a tumbler of butter-milk, which was no sooner received than he issued his orders for a glass of water. After having eaten voraciously of every thing on the table, asking all the time what stuff this was, and what thing that, he leaned back in his chair with a loud hiccup, and began to drum his feet together under the table. His mother occasionally put in a "don't Robert," or "be patient, dear;" but she seemed not to have the faintest perception that the comfort of others could be disturbed by his *youthful impetuosity*, as she called it. Mr. Walton tried to look pleased and cheerful, but even *his* imperturbable good nature was tried beyond endurance. Was this the commencement of his tranquil domestic life, on which his fancy had been luxuriating? Was the woman who had allowed her own son to arrive at his present years, without exerting one restraining influence on his animal propensities, till they had acquired a giant's strength and a tyrant's power one who was fitted to act a mother's part to his affectionate and wayward child? Was she worthy to be the successor of his sweet and holy-minded wife?

Ah! Mr. Walton, these mental interrogatories are made too late. You never even saw the woman to whom you have given the sacred name of wife, till all necessary preliminaries

had been arranged by a mutual friend. You never saw the graceless boy, whom you must now acknowledge as a son, till you went to breathe the marriage vows, and swear before God and man to love and cherish his mother, till death did ye part. You were told it was an eligible match; that she was a great manager, and looked well to the ways of her household. You thought it too much trouble to take a long journey to see her beforehand, and judge of her feminine attractions. She had one husband, and that was a surety for her charms. The heyday of your youth was past, and the golden tints of romance faded into the gray tints of reality. It is true, when you first met this future bride, and beheld those pale, hard-looking eyes, those high arched, white brows, and those thin, pinched lips, your heart-springs recoiled with a sudden jar that destroyed the delicate machinery within. And when that darling boy of hers first exhibited his rare domestic accomplishments, several cold shudders ran through your frame, premonitory symptoms of future wretchedness. The image of your first love stole across your memory, in all the freshness of her virgin beauty, the delicacy of her matron loveliness, and you tried to shut it out. Your little Linda, too; you thought of her and sighed, and wished you had not been so precipitate, had exercised your own judgment instead of following blindly the counsels of others. But it was too late: your honour as a gentleman was pledged, and you could not retract. You would probably get accustomed to all this, and become reconciled to your lot. Yes! and your child will become accustomed to have all her warm affections driven back into her breast, and turned to fiery scorpions there. She will be accustomed to the icy rod that will rule her by night and by day; to the goad that spurs when weary nature sighs for repose, to the rein that chafes when the roused spirit bounds for action.—“But know thou, for all this, thou shalt be brought unto judgment.”

CHAPTER II.

As Aunt Judy had anticipated, the keys were taken from her possession, and she was reduced to the level of a common servant. This was a sad wound to the faithful creature's pride, for she had watched over her master's interests with scrupulous fidelity and real attachment. But this was not all the humiliation she was called upon to suffer. She, as well as the other household servants, had always partaken of the same food that was placed on their master's table, and they had never been stinted in their portion. It is true, they waited till his board was served, and his room swept and garnished; but then their meals were partaken in uninterrupted enjoyment and with contented spirits. The new Mrs. Walton made a material change in this arrangement. The meal was measured and the bacon weighed for their daily food, and whatever dainties were left upon the table were set aside for Master Robert's luncheons. She discovered that it was a great waste to supply servants with sugar, and that coffee was very bad for their constitutions. But the greatest trial and mortification poor Judy was doomed to suffer, was the withdrawal of Linda from her influence and presence.

"Linda has been left entirely too much with the negroes," said Mrs. Walton to her husband. "I can do nothing with her while Judy stays in the house and interferes with my authority. I shall put Judy in the weaving-room, and Minta and Dilsy in the spinning-room. I have servants of my own, already trained, whom I shall substitute in their place."

What could Mr. Walton say? She was literally conforming to his wishes, in separating Linda from her sable companions, and in superintending her constantly with her own

eye; but he could not, without many secret pangs, see the faithful servants, who doated on his child, banished from the household, and strangers fulfilling their duties with coldness and constraint. Linda was outrageous when she learned the new organization of the family. She declared that "Aunt Judy shouldn't be put out of the house; that *she* would go and live in the weaving-room; that pa ought to be ashamed to let his old servants be treated so bad; that she was an heiress, and a big heiress, and she had a right to be minded."

Having for the first time burst through the bonds of fear, her long pent-up feelings—her sense of wrongs and degradation—her hatred and wrath—refused to be restrained; she wept and stamped her little feet in the impotence of her rage.

"Take that child up stairs," said Mrs. Walton, without raising her voice in the least, to one of her own strong-armed slaves; "take her up stairs."

Mr. Walton, however his judgment might be convinced that she deserved punishment, could not bear to see her carried out of his sight, where he knew not what penalty would be inflicted on her. The feelings of the father were roused.

"Put that child down," said he, with authority. "I will take her away myself."

"Mr. Walton," said his lady, softly, "my servants must obey me, and I allow no one to interfere. You must leave the management of that child to me."

The child was borne screaming from the room, stretching out her arms to her father and crying out till he could hear her no longer.

"Please, pa, please take me with you!"

Had Mr. Walton at this moment exerted the spirit of a man and a father; had he rescued his child from the iron despotism that was beginning to coil around her; had he himself administered needed rebuke, mingling wise counsel with words of love, what a blessed change he might have wrought!

But there was something paralyzing in the influence of that unchanging eye, that unvarying tone, the soft "shall" and "will," that was always issuing from those thin lips. Like many other easy-tempered, weak-willed men, he yielded to a power he loathed and despised, and became a passive instrument of evil.

The next time he saw his little daughter, she was sitting in a low chair by her step-mother, busily engaged in making patch-work. She had a subdued, sullen air; her eyes were red and swollen, and every now and then she drew a long breath, like the last sigh of a tempest. She raised not her eyes at her father's entrance, nor bounded to meet him, as she was wont to do. Through and through, and through again, went her long-threaded needle, though a tear that dropped on the bright calico showed that she could not see very well where it was going.

"Linda, my darling," said the self-upbraiding father, "come and sit in my lap, and show me that pretty work you are doing."

"I have given her a task," replied Mrs. Walton, "and she must finish it before dinner."

"She has never been used to confinement," Mr. Walton ventured to say, "and I am afraid it will make her sick."

"Shame to those who have had the charge of her," said Mrs. Walton, "that she is not used to it. A child of eight years of age is old enough to be taught habits of industry and propriety. I do not confine my son, for I wish him to have a manly and independent character; but girls are very different. The domestic virtues must be cultivated in them."

"But I should think that an hour at a time," continued Mr. Walton——"

"Mr. Walton, I wish to be thoroughly understood in this matter," interrupted she, quietly; "when we married, you asked me to take charge of your daughter and be a mother to

her. A lady must be a much better judge than a gentleman of the education of a young girl. Linda has promised to obey me, and I mean she shall. And one thing, let me say, Mr. Walton, I have never allowed any one to interfere with my domestic arrangements, and I never will."

This was unanswerable ; at least not a word was uttered in reply. Mr. Walton gazed upon Linda, who sat sewing and sewing without lifting her eyes, heaving those long-drawn breaths, which sound as if they came from under a leaden weight. What spell had converted the passionate little rebel into that silent, plodding seamstress ? Untie her muslin apron ; look at those purplish streaks on her tender back, and the secret of her submission may be discovered.

It was the first time that personal chastisement had ever been applied to Linda. Her own mother had always been able to subdue her without having recourse to a means which should be the last exercise of parental authority ; and her father had never lifted his hand to smite a slave, much less his child. At first, the shame and the insult maddened her to wilder rebellion, and she cried out, between every blow, "I don't care ; you may kill me ; but I won't mind." At length physical suffering triumphed over pride and self-will. She pleaded for pardon, and promised obedience. That promise once given, she resolved to obey. A high sense of honour, remarkable in so young a child, made her attach a solemn obligation to her word.

She would not complain to her father, for it would do no good. She would not complain to Aunt Judy, for they would whip her too. She would try to submit, and never again expose herself to the burning shame and smarting pain of the lash.

When her day's task was completed, and she was allowed to go out in the open air for a while, she flew to Aunt Judy's room, who almost smothered her with caresses. But Linda's smarting back writhed under the pressure of her arms.

“Oh, you hurt me, Aunt Judy; you hurt me so!”

The quick eye of the nurse caught a glimpse of the darkening stripes. The poor creature “lifted up her voice and wept aloud.” She kissed the delicate skin a thousand times over between each purple line, murmuring the name of her “poor, dear, dead mistress.”

“Oh, Lord, have mercy on us!” she cried. “I never ’spected to come to this. Bless her little soul and body! If it had been poor Judy’s back, she no mind it one bit. But this little, white, tender creature!—Oh, Lord, Lord! what will become of that awful woman at the day of judgment, when poor, dear mistress stand there with beautiful white wings on, and a golden harp in her hand? She stay way off; way off by the black pit, all black hisself—howling!”

Judy did not call upon the name of the Lord in vain, as too many do, in the moment of strong excitement. She was sincerely and devoutly pious. She believed in the judgments of the Almighty and the retributions of eternity. She believed the blood of a Saviour had power to cleanse the sins of the African as well as the white man, and that, if she trusted in Him for salvation, she would be a beautiful white angel in heaven. It is true, her ideas of spiritual happiness were very dim and obscure. Her visions of heaven consisted of golden streets and golden harps, and white-winged spirits, and of an exceeding great glory.

She often imagined she saw wondrous sights and heard wondrous things, and she described them sometimes with an eloquence that might inspire belief. But of that invisible glory of holiness which fills the inner temple of the soul, that heaven of purity and faith begun in the heart in this world, poor Judy had but a faint conception.

From this time, the life of little Linda assumed a character of dreary monotony. Day after day she sat in her little chair, drawing her needle through and through the everlast-

ing patchwork, with a look of sad and oft-times sullen endurance, clouding her late joyous countenance. She was as the sparkling fountain imprisoned within marble tablets; the bird, with an iron weight fastened to its heaven-plumed wing; the rosebud, enveloped in a leaden case. While she was tied down regularly to her morning and evening tasks, Robert was permitted to roam at large, in all the glory of independence, making anarchy and uproar wherever he went. He never came near her without pulling her hair, pinching her arms, pulling her chair from under her, sticking pins into her, and performing various other interesting experiments. At first, she shrieked and resisted; but finding the more she seemed to feel the torments he inflicted, the more he redoubled them, she learned to bear them with the unflinching fortitude of the Spartan boy; and Robert, deriving no amusement from the system of passive endurance, turned the artillery of his mischief in other directions.

Mrs. Walton, who had perceived from the first, the instinctive dislike of Linda, conceived a hatred for the child, which grew with the powers she exercised over her. Day by day she imposed upon her new restraints, and diminished, as far as possible, the scanty store of enjoyments left to her desolate childhood. Linda had a little room, opening into her father's, where she had slept since her mother's death. Though, as it has been said before, she was a fearless child and not afraid of the ghost-peopled realms of *the dark*, she loved her little room, and its contiguity to her remaining parent. It was pleasant when she awaked in the night to hear his breathing near; it was pleasant in the bright morning to hear his voice calling her to awake, "for the sun was up, and the little birds singing about the windows."

One evening, when tired and listless she sought her little couch, she was surprised by seeing a larger bed in its place, a finer counterpane, and an air of superior comfort about the

room. She turned to her step-mother with a glow of gratitude lighting up her whole face.

"Oh, how nice it looks," she exclaimed. "What a pretty counterpane—what nice curtains,—and did you fix it this fine for me? How very, very good."

"Master Robert is going to have this room," said the negro who now waited upon her, one of Mrs. Walton's trained servants.

"He shan't!" exclaimed Linda, passionately, forgetting in her overwhelming astonishment her promise of implicit obedience. "He shan't have it—it's mine—next to my own dear papa's. He is a great big boy, and ought to be ashamed to want to sleep here. This is pa's house, and I'm an heiress, and I won't give it up!"

Pale with passion now looked that young face so lately illuminated with the glow of gratitude. The spoiler had entered her secret sanctuary and robbed her of her household gods.

"Robert has always slept near me," calmly replied Mrs. Walton, "and I mean he shall do so still. I expected to find proper arrangements for him when I came, but as no one thought of his comfort, I have provided for it myself. Here, Nelly, take Miss Linda to her new apartment, and if she shows the least rebellion, let me know it. Another word of insolence shall not pass unpunished."

The vision of the disgracing lash, its whizzing sound, the pain, the smart, the shame, passed before the mind of the outraged child. One look from those dark brown eyes flashed on the step-mother's impassive face, then turned on the walls, endeared by the memory of a mother's tenderness and a father's care, one long, deep sigh, and the child passed on to the remote, comfortless apartment prepared for her reception. It was a large, unplastered room, almost entirely destitute of furniture. The shadows hung in gloomy wreaths from the dark rafters scarcely lighted up by the dim candle which Nelly placed on

a table of red-stained pine. It was a room which the first Mrs. Walton had used as a lumber-room, little imagining her orphan daughter would ever be driven there by the cruelty of a tyrannizing successor.

Let it not be supposed that the author of this tale would cast an odium on that class of females called to fulfil the duties of step-mother. There are many who carry to this difficult and responsible situation the holiest purposes and tenderest affections; who, standing in the place of the departed, feel the solemnities of death hallowing the duties of life; who, feeling themselves called to a sacred mission, gird up their spirits to the task, even though ingratitude and neglect and misconception may be their best reward. There are those who bind up with gentlest hand the wounds of orphanage; revive with the dew of tenderness and the smile of encouragement the withering garlands of household joy, and convert the home, which death has made desolate, into a dwelling of peace and happiness and love. Blessings, endless blessings, cluster round these ministering angels of earth. The spirits of the dead hover around them, shedding balm from their refulgent wings. The prayers of innocent childhood go up to the heaven of heavens in their behalf, and the heart of widowed love and sorrow reposes in hope and confidence on their faithful bosoms. Oh, that one of these blessed ministering angels had been sent to watch over little Linda!

She sat down in that large, dark room, on the foot of her little bed, and looked all around it with a slow, melancholy gaze. She seemed to take in at last the realities of her situation, and the dreariness of her life's future rose appallingly before her. With the instinctive feeling of dependence on God, which leads the human heart to turn to him when earthly comforts fail, she opened her trunk, and, taking out her mother's Bible, knelt down at the foot of the bed, and began to search for some passage which that dear mother had taught her to read

"I remember," said the child to herself, "something about God's hearing the young ravens when they cry, and about his seeing the little sparrows when they fall. She turned the leaves without finding the text she sought, when, by chance, her eye caught some words which arrested her attention: "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." She read these again and again. She read them to herself, then repeated them aloud. "Oh!" thought she, "the Lord will take care of me, for there is no one but God and Aunt Judy to love me now." Large tears rolled down her cheeks and fell on the leaves of her Bible. She was very sorry she had given way to such a burst of passion, for she was afraid the Lord would not love her for it; but she would pray to him to forgive her, and she would promise never to do so any more.

The negro Nelly, whose own pallet was spread near Linda's bed, and who had thrown herself across it, looked with a kind of awe upon the child, with her innocent hands clasped together and her tearful eyes raised to heaven. She hated her despotic mistress; and though, from fear of offending her, she spoke in a harsh tone to Linda before her face, her natural sense of right revolted from being made the passive instrument of oppression. She hated Master Robert too, the noisy, pampered, selfish tyrant, and thought it a shame that he should be installed in Miss Linda's pretty, quiet room. She thought all this when Linda was giving vent to her burning anger, and asserting her rights with such passionate vehemence: but now, when she saw her subdued to such patient meekness, reading her Bible, then praying with such a holy look, the negro's heart grew blacker and blacker towards her mistress, and tenderer and softer towards her young victim.

"Never mind, young missy," said she, after spreading the clothes carefully over her, "I rather be in your place than hers, any how. She be sorry bimeby, you see, if she ben't

Massa Robert give her trouble enough hisself 'fore long. Never mind, he pay her for treating little missy so bad. Oh, lud! lud! think of Massa Robert in Miss Lindy's nice little room! He eat, stuff hisself all day long, then turn and toss and make hisself sick all night."

Linda fell asleep with the guttural accents of the negro murmuring in her ear.

When Mr. Walton retired for the night, he went, as was his custom, to look at his sleeping child, and to indulge in those affectionate meditations which the poor man habitually repressed in the presence of his wife. What was his astonishment to see a boyish, sunburned face; a shock of thick, black hair spread about on the pillow—in short, the slumbering beauties of Master Robert, instead of his own lovely little girl.

"What is all this?" cried he to Mrs. Walton, in a tone louder than he had ever dared to use before; "what is that great boy doing there? And what have you done with my child?"

"I've given her another room," replied the soft, hissing, serpent voice. "Robert is to have her's now. He's very apt to be sick in the night, and it is not safe for him to be by himself. I always had him near me at home, and I mean he shall be now."

"But where's Linda? what have you done with her?" cried the father, wiping the thick drops of perspiration from his brow.

"She's in a very comfortable room. But you needn't speak so loud, Mr. Walton. You'll wake Robert, and I can't have him disturbed."

"I'll wake him with a vengeance," exclaimed Mr. Walton, the feelings of the indignant father getting the mastery of the husband's grovelling fears. "I'll rouse him from his soft nest with a witness. Here, you lubberly rascal, you great

selfish baby you, get up and tell me what you've done with my poor, precious, little Linda."

"Let me alone, let me alone," cried Robert, shaken and roused by no very gentle grasp. "Mother, make him let go."

"You had better not touch that child!" exclaimed the mother, pushing her husband back with a force that sent him reeling against the wall. There was something terrific in the pale passion of her stony eyes and ashy lips, that white heat, so intense and fearful. She fixed those eyes upon him with such a moveless, metallic glare, he became weak and passive as the bird, when fascinated by the gaze of the rattlesnake. "If you ever touch that boy again, you'll rue the hour that you was born."

"I rue it now," groaned the miserable father, and taking his lamp in his desperate hand, he went into the long passage which extended from his own chamber to a wing of the mansion. He opened the first room, for there were several leading into this passage. It was a chamber handsomely furnished for company, and so was the next. He went on, till he found the large, unplastered room to which Linda was consigned, like a piece of useless rubbish, not worth the keeping. There she lay, in the sweet, deep sleep of innocence and childhood; one round, white arm drooped from the side of the bed, on the other her cheek was pillowed. Her eye-lashes were still moist with tears, but there was an air of placid sweetness and resignation diffused over her countenance that melted his inmost soul. Scorn him as you will, that weak, woman-ruled man, but pity him too. Did you ever read the story of the prisoner, who was immured in an iron cell, with two or three grated windows? How one by one those grated windows closed up, the iron walls grew narrower, and more narrow, till the shrinking, suffocating victim felt himself crushing in his iron coffin! Thus imprisoned, and galled, and hopeless of escape, within a constantly narrowing circle of domestic joys, narrowing and

darkening every day, lived the rich, married widower. Why does he not claim the glorious prerogative of manhood, and become the lord of his household? Alas! he has an imbecility of mind, an infirmity of purpose, a cowardliness of heart, that makes it a moral impossibility. He can no more shake off that woman's yoke from his neck than the stream bound by winter's cold chains can shake the superincumbent weight of ice from its bosom. He kneels by the bedside of the sleeping orphan—he buries his face in the sheets that cover her—he weeps in bitterness of soul—he mourns in dust and ashes over the evil he has brought upon her—he prays God to forgive him his blindness and folly—but he yields! He returns in silence to his own apartment, and lies down on his wretched couch.

Nelly's description of the manner in which Master Robert passed his nights was fully verified. He groaned and tumbled about, and bawled out to his mother for peppermint and paregoric, and the tender parent rose and ministered to his wants, and tried to soothe her darling to sleep, with fond maternal caresses, unmindful of the little motherless exile in the dark, raftered room.

CHAPTER III.

WHILE the internal affairs at Mr. Walton's presented so unhappy an aspect, the external state of things wore an appearance of manifest improvement. The negro cabins were white-washed, the fences repaired, the wheels were all humming and buzzing, the shuttles flying, and the negroes kept busy from early morn to latest eve. The traveller, gazing on the luxuriant woods, and catching a glimpse of Pine Grove, with its broad-winged, hospitable-looking dwelling-house—its row of neat, white out-buildings and well-trimmed shade-trees—would inquire the owner's name, and he would be told that it belonged to Mr. Walton, a rich planter, who had lately married a rich widow, one of the best managers in the country, who would soon double his property and turn every inch of his land into gold and silver. Mr. Walton was an envied man.

Linda became reconciled to her change of apartments, and told her father she would not go back if she could—an assurance which relieved his mind of an intolerable burden. The truth was, the farther she was removed from her dreaded step-mother, the happier she was, and Nelly was become as warm a friend and as faithful an ally as ever Aunt Judy had been. She permitted her to sit up and read after Mrs. Walton had sent her to bed, rolled up pieces of white cloth, and sewing strips of hems across for arms, dressed them in calico, and called them dolls, for her juvenile nursery, and brought her many a little luxury, surreptitiously obtained, of which her mistress little dreamed. Her windows, too, looked out upon a beautiful creek, and she loved to watch the bright waters sparkling in the morning sun-beams, or flowing with golden

lustre when gilt by his evening rays. Her spirit went out over the waters like the dove of the ark, and longed to find some green resting-place—some little flowery isle—where there was nothing but love and peace.

A circumstance soon occurred which interrupted the monotonous tone of her feelings, and called forth a courage and self-devotion scarcely paralleled in so young a child. Judy had incurred the displeasure of Mrs. Walton to such a degree that she declared the faithful creature should be sold. A speculator was in the neighbourhood, and she determined to avail herself of so favourable an opportunity. She had so completely taken the reins of government into her own hands, that her laws were considered immutable as the Medes and Persians. Her word was the fiat of fate. Nothing was left but submission. This arrangement had been kept very secret; but Nelly, who had received some stolen knowledge of it, told it in confidence to Linda one night after she had retired to bed.

At this intelligence, the affectionate child wrung her hands and wept bitterly. She had learned the impotence of rage, and no longer exclaimed, as she would have done in months past, "She shan't be sold." She had a horrid idea of these cruel speculators, and would a thousand times rather see poor Judy in her grave than sold to one of these hard-hearted men. She must save her own kind nurse from such a terrible doom. But how? An appeal to her father would be vain, who never acted in open opposition to his wife's will. After her paroxysm of tears had subsided, she lay with her hands clasped over her eyes a long time, revolving great schemes in her young brain. At length, leaning forward on her elbow, she exclaimed—

"To-morrow, did you say, Nelly? Will she be sold to-morrow?"

"Yes—the coming to-morrow, after dinner; so I hear mistress say."

"Nelly—please, good Nelly, go into the kitchen, and bring me two or three biscuits. Don't let any one see them, but bring them to me."

"Lord bless the child! what she want of biscuit this time o' night? Miss Linda, you eat supper—you no hungry now."

"But I will be hungry by and by," continued Linda, more earnestly; "I want them—please, Nelly."

"Miss Lindy cry so much, make her feel mighty hollow—that it. Yes, she have biscuit."

And Nelly brought some and laid them on Linda's bed. Linda thanked her as she had never done before for any thing to eat, and told her to lie down and go to sleep, for she would not trouble her any more.

"What for Miss Lindy look at me so hard?" said Nelly, as she composed herself on her pallet; "what make her eye so big to-night?"

Linda had a great purpose in her heart, and her eyes did indeed dilate and darken while silently planning its execution. She lay gazing out into the still moonlight night, so beautiful, so glorious in its blue, upward depths; and her spirit grew stronger as she gazed. The loud breathing of Nelly alone broke the silence of the hour. She knew that her parents were retired to rest, and every thing around the house spoke the slumbering state of the inmates. Then Linda softly rose, slipped on her dress, carefully putting the biscuits in her pocket, and, taking her shoes in her hand, slid down the back stairs. The doors were never fastened at night, for the planter requires no guard but his powerful watch-dog, who roams unchained at the midnight hour, the fierce guardian of his master's property and life. Every thing seemed to favour the little heroine, for she found the outside door partly open, and she glided through noiselessly as the moonbeams.

Bruno, the noble mastiff, lay close by the threshold. Lift

ing his large, magnificent head, he was about to let out a volume of sound, but a low whisper of "Hush, Bruno, hush!" and a biscuit dropped suddenly between his huge paws, conciliated the Cerberus of the household, and the miniature Psyche passed on.

"It is only half a mile through the woods," murmured she. "It is light as day—God won't let any thing hurt me, for I read in the Bible to-night that he takes care of the conies in the hollows."

Now this was the great purpose Linda had conceived and had begun to execute. There was a planter of the name of Marshall, who lived a mile and a half from them by the carriage road, and only half a mile measured by the by-path through the woods. He was their nearest neighbour, and had always been intimate with the family during the life of the first Mrs. Walton and *his* after widowhood. He was a kind, benevolent, good man, who was beloved and respected by all who knew him. He had a little daughter about two years older than Linda, whom she was sometimes permitted to visit. Mr. Marshall had visited her father a few days before, to talk with him about a new teacher who was coming into the neighbourhood, and she remembered hearing him say that his wife wanted a good house-servant, as the one on whom she chiefly relied was constantly sick. It was to beg Mr. Marshall to buy Judy before the cruel speculator arrived to consummate the bargain, that Linda had started on her lonely expedition. She knew if she could persuade him to offer a higher price than the speculator, her mercenary step-mother would accept the offer. Then Judy would have a kind master—a happy home—and, when she grew big herself and had her own money, she would buy her back again, and they would live together all their lives.

In the strength of her pure affection—her disinterested 'ove—the child walked on alone into the deep pine woods.

Once she looked back, and saw her mother's tombstone gleaming cold and white in the solemn splendour of the night.

"If she is looking down from heaven," thought Linda, "she will smile on me, for she loved Aunt Judy, too."

Fast and faster pattered on the little feet through the deepening shadows, now and then emerging into a glorious burst of light—then again involved in gloom. She felt the solemn loneliness of nature. Her heart began to beat quick and quicker; she started as the night wind sighed through the tall pines, or the plaintive lowing of cattle came in melancholy music to her ear. She thought of big, runaway negroes, who might be hidden in the woods, and who might rush out with long, sharp knives and kill her by the way-side. The old, broken stumps assumed the forms of wild beasts, crouching for their prey; and the narrow, sandy path looked like a tall person in white advancing to meet her. Fearless as she was by nature, nameless terrors would steal upon her in the strange loneliness of her pilgrimage. She remembered the "Babes in the Wood," and thought if she had a little brother with her, she would be willing to lie down and die, and let Robin redbreast "cover them up carefully with leaves." But then Judy would be sold to the speculator. This spurred her weary feet, and she ran on without looking to the right or the left. The large, double log-cabin of Mr. Marshall appeared in sight. A new fear assailed her. How was she to gain admittance if they were all asleep? Then the watch-dog—would a biscuit pacify him as it had done her Bruno? Trembling and irresolute, she mounted the steps of a block placed in the front of the yard for the benefit of equestrians, and looked up at the windows all flooded by the silver moonlight. How like a spirit she looked, standing there in her light dress, with bare head and arms, looking upward so earnestly. Surely heaven favoured her generous design. The good master of the house had not yet retired, but was sitting at one of

those very windows enjoying the stillness of the glorious night. He beheld the little figure standing on the block, and knew not what to think. Had he been a superstitious man, he would certainly have taken it for an apparition. Determined to ascertain the nature of the sudden and fairy-like appearance, he came forth, and stood for a moment under the trees without approaching. The dog sprang up, barking.

"Down, Fido, down!" said the master, in a gentle voice, and the dog again crouched at his feet. "Who's there?" said he, in an encouraging tone.

"It's me!" replied a little, trembling voice.

"And who is me?" cried Mr. Marshall, opening the gate with eager curiosity to ascertain what sprite it was perched on the steps.

"It's Linda, little Linda Walton," was the answer, and the figure sprang from the block, and its arms were clinging caressingly round him.

"Good heavens! what brought the child here alone at this time of night? What's the matter? Your father—he's not sick?"

"No, no—it's nothing but Judy; I want you to buy poor Judy; please buy her, and I'll pay you ten times over when I get big."

And Linda, breathless and excited, told him the tale of Judy's wrongs, and her own fears and hopes.

"And you walked through the woods all alone to-night, just to save a negro from being sold to a cruel master!" exclaimed the benevolent planter, clasping the heroic child in his arms, and wiping away the tears that started from his eyes. "Yes, I'll buy her, if I have to pay double what she is worth; I'll buy her, if I have to pay all my next cotton crop brings to purchase her! She's just the servant I want; but you shall have her back again when you claim her, for all that."

Linda was almost wild with joy at the success of her mission. She cried and laughed, and jumped simultaneously, entreated Mr. Marshall to come very early in the morning, and never to tell anybody that she had asked him to do so. Mr. Marshall promised, though he longed to tell every one of her fearless devotion, and bid her remain quietly a few moments, till he brought a horse, on which he would bear her home himself.

How happy was Linda, riding back in triumph through the same path, which seemed begirt with terrors a few moments before ! How benignantly the moon smiled upon her ! How lovingly the gale kissed her cool cheek ! How kindly the arms of Mr. Marshall enfolded her ! How he cheered her with praises and words of tenderness ! When arrived at the termination of the woods, he dismounted and led his young charge silently towards the house, kissed her again, and watched her as she approached the yet open door. A quick bark—another biscuit tossed—and all was still.

Linda reached her chamber unseen and uninterrupted. Nelly was snoring more profoundly than ever. Every thing was just as she had left it. Linda crept into bed, chilled from her exposure to the night air, but her heart glowing with gratitude and joy. She could not sleep ; her soul was magnified within her ; she felt bigger, older, better ; she loved the world a great deal better, since there was such a good man in it as Mr. Marshall. She almost envied Aunt Judy her happy home. Full of sweet, happy thoughts, it was almost morning before she closed her eyelids, and then bright visions, sent by the guardian cherubim, hovered round her couch.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. MARSHALL redeemed his promise; and Mrs. Walton, without any suspicion of Linda's agency, accepted the liberal offer of her neighbour. Judy, who had been anticipating the most dreaded fate of the slave, went on her way rejoicing, blessing her young mistress, though unconscious of the great debt she owed her, and wishing she was going, too.

An event occurred at this time which had a great influence on Linda's happiness. A school was opened in the neighbourhood, in which Master Robert and herself were entered as pupils. Mrs. Walton would gladly have kept Linda at home, sewing on the "never-ending, still beginning" patch-work, but the current of public opinion set too strongly against such a thing. She could tyrannize at home, and the world would never interfere; but this was out-door business, and mankind would sit in judgment upon her, if she sent her own son, and debarred her step-daughter from the same privilege.

The teacher was a gentleman of the name of Longwood, a native of the granite hills of New England. Being threatened by a pulmonary affection, he had sought the more genial latitude of the South, and, being destitute of fortune, was obliged to pay his expenses by the exercise of his talents. He came highly recommended as an elegant classical scholar, a thorough mathematician, and an accomplished linguist. The planters in the vicinity, who united to pay his salary, as is customary at the South, were induced to offer him higher wages than his predecessors had received, on account of his superior recommendations.

The night previous to his installation in the duties of his office, Mr. Walton invited him to supper, as Mrs. Walton wished to give him particular directions about the management of her son. Linda felt the deepest curiosity, chastened by still deeper awe, respecting her future instructor. She awaited his entrance as she would that of a superior being, believing that he who was to open to her the gate of knowledge must be like one of those oriental genii of whom her mother used to tell her.

The tall, spare figure of Mr. Longwood, his pale, high forehead, prominent nose, and small, deep-set eyes, made a very different impression from the stern, majestic image her fancy had drawn. There was an appearance of physical debility about him, with which his slender voice harmonized well; but there was a restless, glancing fire in his small, gray eyes, that spoke great mental energy and enthusiasm. No one could be in his company half an hour without feeling that he was a complete *original*—a strange mixture of learning and pedantry, shrewdness and simplicity, poetry, phrenology, and syntax. It was dubious whether he was in earnest or jest—whether he wished to excite mirth or produce gravity—whether the quick sparkle of his eye was the result of drollery or enthusiastic feeling.

Robert stared upon him unrecedingly, trying to discover whether he was a man to be feared or not.

“Your son has the organ of language very strongly developed, madam,” said he, placing his hand on the boy’s head, which was rudely shaken off; “great fulness about the eyes. *Il fait les grands yeux*, as they say in French—organ of veneration much depressed; large self-esteem; animal propensities predominant; he must avoid temptation; *Virtus est vitium fugere*—to shun vice is a virtue——”

The offending hand was again placed on the boy’s head, in the enthusiasm of a phrenological examination.

"Let go of my head!" cried out the subject; "you are sticking your thumbs in me. Let go, I say!"

"The organ of combativeness is also strikingly developed," continued the gentleman, pursuing with his eye the regions which had eluded his touch. "Pardon me, madam—I always study the heads of my pupils. 'The proper study of mankind is man.' By this means, I arrive at a true estimate of character, and know exactly what powers to bring into action. Your son is a study, madam—a great study. I shall devote myself to the task of developing his intellectual and spiritual organs. *Adjuta me, quo id fiat facilius*—aid me, that that may be done more easily."

Mrs. Walton was somewhat propitiated by his remark, that her son was a great study. Bewildered by such a display of erudition, she for the first time felt ashamed of Robert's neglected intellect. Of limited education and low attainments herself, she was somewhat dazzled by the brilliant mosaic of his conversation.

"I know nothing of phrenology, sir," said she; "but I dare say you will find Robert as smart, naturally, as any boy of his age. He is very backward, and I am afraid will give you some trouble. I have petted and indulged him a great deal, as he is my only one. I want you not to be too strict with him at first, as he has never been used to restraint, and I am confident he could not bear it."

"*Les talents produisent suivant la culture*—talents yield according to their cultivation—as Marmontel justly observes, madam. 'Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined,' as L'opé very sensibly remarks. My mode of discipline, madam, is *congruentem naturæ*—agreeably to nature—I endeavour to govern by her immutable laws—but it is a very mysterious process. *Qualis sit animus, ipse animus nescit*—the mind itself knows not what the mind is—as Cicero very pertinently remarks 'What a creature is man!—a worm—a god!—

midway from nothing to the Deity,' as Young feelingly observes."

"I am pleased that you agree with me in opinion, sir," said Mrs. Walton, catching a faint gleam of his meaning through his thick-coming quotations. "You do not use corporal punishment, I presume."

"Not until reason is impotent, madam. *La conscience nous avertit en ami, avant de nous punir en juge*—conscience warns us as a friend before punishing as a judge. I endeavour to imitate the great vicegerent of Jehovah. I enlarge veneration, diminish self-esteem, depress the animal propensities, and develope the moral sentiments—a great work, madam—*Haud equidem tali me dignor honore*—I am not worthy of such an honour—as Virgil modestly remarks."

"Why don't you talk English, like other folks?" interrogated Robert. "What makes you mix up all sorts of words together in that way? You an't going to learn me that fashion, I tell you."

The mother smiled at her boy's wit; but the incorrigible schoolmaster gravely answered :

"*Mithridates, duorum et viginti gentium rex, totidem linguis jura dixit*—Mithridates, king of twenty-two nations, pronounced judicial decisions in as many languages."

During this conversation, Linda had remained immovable with wonder. She would have felt crushed by such a torrent of learning, had not the kind sparkle of his eye reassured her. Mr. Walton, not willing that she should remain entirely in the back-ground, took hold of her hand and drew her towards Mr. Longwood.

"Here is another little pupil of yours—what do you think of her phrenological development?"

The face of the tall pedant lighted up with a kind of ecstasy as he passed his slender fingers through the child's short brown curls—"Splendid!" he exclaimed; "quite an equi-

librium—perfect adaptation of all the organs to each other—benevolence, reverence, ideality, conscientiousness—*Oh! formosa puella*—what pleasure shall I enjoy in instructing thee? I will make thee a ray of the sun of science—a flower of the garden of literature. “Early, bright, chaste as morning lew,” as Young feelingly remarks. Madam, your daughter is beautiful study.”

“She is my step-daughter,” replied the lady, in a freezing tone. “You will have to use very strict measures with her, a very self-willed, passionate child.”

“I have always found gentle measures most successful with her,” Mr. Walton ventured to assert. “She has a remarkably affectionate disposition, and does not like to offend those she loves.”

“Supper is ready, Mr. Walton,” cried the step-mother, with a lifting of her white eye-brows, that her husband understood but too well; “it has been announced some time.”

Robert, as usual, took the lead to the dining-room, and had already provided himself with a large piece of cake before the guest and family were seated.

“Your son has the organ of alimentiveness most wonderfully developed, madam,” said Mr. Longwood, gazing in apparent admiration on the young glutton. “Great care must be taken lest its power become weakened by too vehement use. *Nulla res est, quæ perferre possit continuam laborem*—there is nothing which can endure perpetual labour—as Quintilian excellently observes.”

Mr. Walton, who, in spite of the imbecility of mind he displayed in yielding to the dominion of a despotic wife, was a man of some intellect and shrewdness, was exceedingly amused with his new acquaintance. He saw that he had a just appreciation of character, and that Master Robert would be in excellent hands. He was convinced, too, that there was more method than he had at first imagined, in his literary mad-

ness, and that his were not random shafts. There was something fascinating in the sparkle of his gray eye, flashing from object to object with the rapidity of lightning. It seemed a burning spark kindled from the spirit fires. He expatiated on the bounties of the hospitable board, of which, however, he sparingly partook.

"This buttermilk," said the enthusiast, "is 'white as the foam upon the wave,' as Ossian beautifully observes. The scene reminds me of a land 'flowing with milk and honey.' *Je puis plus de cas de l'abeille, qui tirent le miel des fleurs, que la femme qui en fait les bouquets*—I value more the bee who draws the honey from the flowers than the woman who makes bouquets of them—an excellent French proverb. You seem a happy man, sir. *Domus plena servis*—a house full of servants. *Dives agres*—rich in land. *Dulcissima uxor*—the gentlest of wives. And children 'like corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace,' as David piously remarks."

The negroes grinned at each other behind the chairs, at the odd manners of the eccentric gentleman. They did not understand his language, but they thought him "mighty funny," and wondered how the white folks could keep from laughing.

It may be supposed that a man of such a peculiar temperament would be incapable of performing with dignity the duties which were required of him. But never was there a more efficient, faithful, devoted teacher than Aristides Longwood. With a patience that never wearied, an energy that never flagged, and an enthusiasm that never grew cold, he set himself to his daily tasks. With characteristic prodigality, he had inscribed on the walls of the school-room innumerable Latin mottoes, accompanied with translations. With a kind of wand, which he carried in his right hand, he would direct the attention of the pupil to each golden aphorism, made more impressive by the two-fold garb in which they were

clothed. The man who could breathe a spark of Promethean fire into the *animalized* nature of Robert Graham, must have possessed a magician's power. That man was Aristides Longwood. At first the boy resisted his laws, refused to study, and attempted to convert the school-room into a scene of anarchy and misrule. After trying in vain every gentle, persuasive, and rational appeal to his conscience, his heart, mind, and soul, he made use of the *argumentum ad hominem*, which was never applied save as a last resort. Robert struggled manfully; but it was astonishing what muscular power there was in those long, slender fingers, when the will was put forth. He never took his magnetic eyes from Robert's face during the operation.

“‘Spare the rod and spoil the child,’ as Solomon sapiently remarks,” repeated Aristides, when the first stroke descended; “*Quod adest memento componere acquis*—remember to make a proper use of the present moment—as Horace pithily observes,” continued he, while the second and third blow was administered; “*Surget humo juvenis*—the youth rises from the ground—as Ovid most appositely remarks.”

Here Robert described involuntarily the segment of a circle, and cried out vociferously for mercy.

“‘Mercy is twice blessed—it blesseth him that gives and him that receives,’ as Shakspeare nobly expresses it,” exclaimed the teacher, gently seating his conquered foe. Then turning to Linda, who wept bitterly over Robert's disgrace and sufferings, notwithstanding the petty wrongs she had endured from him, “*Hinc illuc lachrymæ*—whence these tears? *Oh! puella purissima*—the tree never yields forth its fragrance till the bark is penetrated,—the shell must be broken before the nut is exhumed.”

Mr. Longwood was kinder and gentler to Robert the remainder of the evening than he had been previous to the flagellation, assisting him in his lessons and encouraging him

with hopes of success. What was passing in the boy's mind could not be told, but he was evidently reaching a great crisis.

When Mrs. Walton learned the astonishing fact that Mr. Longwood had dared to whip her son, in spite of her prohibition, she was pale with passion. She declared he never should set his foot in the school-room again; that he should know whom he had to deal with, and not insult her and her son with impunity.

"*I will* go again," cried Robert, fixing his black eyes steadily upon hers. "If you had punished me before, I wouldn't be the big fool I am. But I'm tired of being a fool; I'm tired of doing nothing but eat and play. There's Sam Marshall, not a bit older than I am, and he knows a heap more than I. I like Mr. Longwood, and I'm not going to stay home because he whipped me."

Mrs. Walton was astounded. The fire she had been so long smothering in her son's breast was beginning to blaze, and she could not quench the kindling flame. Ambition was mounting from the ashes of humiliation. From this hour, Mr. Longwood maintained the empire he had acquired. He never again had occasion to exercise in his behalf the magic wand. The people wondered, and said that a miracle had been wrought.

If such was the influence he had gained over Robert, what might not be expected from Linda, with her bright intelligence, generous impulses, and yearning desires for instruction? Oh! what a spring was given to that elastic spirit, held down so long by such a leaden weight! She felt as if she were living in a new world—such streams of light were flowing into her mind. Well might her teacher say that she was a "beautiful study," for she drank in instruction as sweetly as the flowers drink in the dews of evening; and gently as the dews come down did he temper his knowledge, so as to meet the capacities of her young understanding.

As it was a long walk from her father's house, Linda carried her dinner in a little basket, and sitting under the shade of the trees, with a book in one hand, she accomplished her noon-day repast. Mr. Longwood often remained, too, for the pleasure of being with his favourite, when he could lay aside the character of the master, in the friend. It was an amusing contrast, to see the tall, slender figure, and pale, peculiar face of the teacher, by the side of the little, blooming girl, both seated under the same tree, in a state of perfect equality and freedom. When conversing with her, he endeavoured to check his overwhelming tide of quotations, but the habit had become such a necessity of his being, it was with difficulty restrained.

"You must never forget, my little friend," he would say, his deep-set eyes changing their restless expression to one of tender earnestness, "that what you are to be hereafter, you must begin to be now. The smallest seed committed to the ground contains the elements of the future tree or plant. If you want to be an angel in heaven, you must begin to plume your wings now, for it takes a long while to soar so high. Begin now, and be not afraid of falling. *Nec gemere aëria cessabit turtur ab ulmo*—nor shall the turtle dove cease to coo from the lofty elm—as Virgil sweetly remarks. By and by you will grow stronger, and your soul will bear you up higher. 'You will mount with wings as eagles,' as the Psalmist gloriously remarks."

Once, when a storm was rising, and seeing that she sat without fear, watching its approach, he led her mind to the sublimity of nature, teaching her to admire the grandeur, as well as the beauty of creation.

"How grand is the forest," said he, "when the storm is rolling over it. *Lævius ventis agitatur ingens pinus*—the great pine is more violently shaken by the winds—as Horace charmingly remarks. I love to see the forest trees, in their

green brotherhood, mingling their branches together. But I am not one of them: 'I was a lovely tree in thy presence, but the blast of the mountain came and laid my green head low,' as Ossian feelingly observes. *Oh! puella carissima*—the strength of my youth is departed."

To the opening mind of Linda the words of her teacher were fertilizing "as streams of living waters fresh from the fountain of intelligence."

CHAPTER V.

THUS time glided onward. Notwithstanding Mrs. Walton's bitter prejudices against *the learned fool, the crazy fool*, as she invariably called him, his star remained in the ascendant. She never forgave him the superior influence he had acquired over the mind of her son; though, through that influence, the boy was every day becoming more intelligent, ambitious, and refined. His intellect possessed a vitality which triumphed over the deadening process of self-indulgence, to which he had been subjected. But his heart!—that unweeded garden, so long left to rank and poisonous luxuriance,—was the wilderness becoming cultivated, and beginning to blossom with the rose? The answer may be read in after-scenes.

A great grief was preparing for Linda. The slender frame of Aristides Longwood gradually assumed an appearance of greater debility. His shoulders drooped more heavily; his eyes, though, if possible, brighter than ever, sunk deeper in their large sockets; and a bright, warning spot burned every evening on his pale and sallow cheek; a hollow cough often interrupted his eloquent instructions. It was but too evident that "the fine gold of the temple" was becoming dim. He

was advised to relinquish his situation, and seek the more genial climate of Cuba. It was a sad trial to him, for strong and tender was the tie that bound his lonely heart to the lovely and affectionate child.

The last day he was with his pupils, after taking leave of them all, in a kind and solemn manner, he turned to Linda, who lingered behind, lost in sorrow that refused consolation.

“*Num id lachrymat virgo?*—Does the maid weep on that account? as Terence pathetically remarks,” said the melted aphorist, his voice trembling with emotion. “I grieve to leave thee, *O puella pulchrissima*, for thou hast entwined thyself around my heart like a vernal garland; and I shall carry away with me the remembrance of its sweetness. *Cælum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare corrunt*—they change their sky, but not their soul, who cross the sea, as Horace feelingly observes. Not even the sky, but only the mountains and the plains—the same heavens will bend above us—the same glorious sun and moon will shine upon us, and the same invisible atmosphere flow around. Forget not my instructions, *virgo juvenissima*. Remember *Nihil est virtute formosius*—nothing is more beautiful than virtue, as Cicero pointedly remarks. Let the beautiful developments of thy character continue to unfold. Let ideality, reverence, and benevolence be still the crowning graces of thy youth. As for me, I am passing away like a shadow, and shall return no more: the traveller to the sea-girt isle will pause at my lonely grave, and exclaim, in the mournful language of Ossian, ‘Narrow is thy dwelling now—dark the place of thy abode! Four stones, with their heads of moss, are the only memorials of thee.’”

Linda never forgot the accents of that solemn, touching voice, as it uttered farewell!—the tender benediction breathed upon her, the trembling hand laid with prophetic earnestness on her bending head. She treasured them as holy memories,

which time never could efface. Wave after wave might flow over them, but, like letters cut deep in the marble, they could not be washed away. Even if the moss gathered about them, how soon the hand of affection would remove the green fret-work, and the characters appear in all their original distinctness !

The aspirations of young Robert were no longer to be kept down. He must go to college. Charlotteville was selected as the institution most favourable for the development of the young Alabamian's independent character. Mrs. Walton was obliged to yield to Robert's imperious decision, though she thought there was no necessity to send him so far in search of advantages he could so well dispense with. He was rich—he was smart enough already, and would have influence enough in society. She felt the separation severely, for this woman, so cold, so hard to others, so destitute of loving-kindness and tender charity, had one soft place in her heart ; there was one spot where the ice was thawed—one point where the iron was fused : she loved her son. He was a part of herself, and her love partook of the despotism and selfishness of her character.

When Mr. Walton expressed his desire to send Linda to a boarding-school, he expected great opposition on her part, and approached the subject with fear and trembling. Contrary to his expectations, she raised but few objections. Intent upon a scheme which she was determined to put in execution in due time, she thought, if Robert was determined to be a thoroughly educated man, it was well that Linda should be placed on an equal footing with him. She was resolved to unite them in marriage as soon as they should return from their respective schools, and thus keep the large fortune of Linda from passing into a stranger's hand. It was necessary to impart her plans to Robert before his departure.

He had been three years under the tuition of Aristides Longwood, and was consequently seventeen years of age. He

was old enough to understand his own interests, and to endeavour to preserve them during his four years' absence. But she knew enough of his disposition not to hazard a commanding tone. She appealed to his selfishness, and asked him if he did not think it would be a splendid project to secure the possession of the magnificent Louisiana plantation by the hand of his young step-sister, who promised moreover to be a beautiful and accomplished woman. By thus judiciously consulting his judgment, instead of enforcing his obedience, Mrs. Walton easily gained her son's concurrence. His mother's lessons had not been lost upon him, and Linda was an uncommonly pretty girl, now entering her twelfth year. Mrs. Walton hesitated upon the expediency of telling Linda her future destiny ; but she decided at length that she was too young, and that there was no danger of her forming any other engagements before she should return to her home again. Robert, therefore, was to be perfectly silent on the subject, endeavouring only to leave a pleasing impression on the heart of his young bride elect. Robert was vain of his person, for he was growing up a tall, handsome youth, with large, commanding black eyes, though they had the same wicked look from which Linda shrunk the first day she beheld him. After the conversation with his mother, those large, wicked, black eyes seemed constantly fixed on Linda. He had appropriated her to himself, and she all at once acquired consequence and interest in his estimation.

"What makes you stare at me so, Robert?" said Linda, embarrassed by his unreceding scrutiny.

"I was thinking, Linda, what a pretty girl you would be four years from this time, when I come back from college, wearing the first honours, which I am determined to gain. *Labor vincit omnia*, as Aristides would sapiently quote."

"I am glad to hear you mention Mr. Longwood," replied Linda, softening at the remembrance of her beloved instructor,

and perhaps not displeased that Robert thought her pretty. "If you follow his advice, you will make a good man as well as a great scholar. Oh, how many things may happen, Robert, before we meet again! It is a long, long time to look forward—four years!"

Robert laughed at the solemn emphasis she put upon the word long, and said they would pass soon enough. How short a time it seemed to look back since they first went to Aristides' school, and yet three years had gone by! He proposed to visit the school-room and its shading grove, and Linda gladly consented. She looked round the walls, illumined by the well-known golden aphorisms; she wandered through the paths where *his* hand so oft had led her; she sat down under the trees that had often bent over them both, and almost imagined she heard his earnest voice in the passing breeze; she thought of him, the lone dweller of the sea-girt isle, perhaps of a lonelier, darker home, and she wept. She felt grateful to Robert for not mocking her sensibility; then her gratitude flowed back to the source of Robert's regeneration, and again she blessed the memory of her eccentric but holy-minded teacher.

Robert and Linda parted, and much indeed occurred ere they met again.

CHAPTER VI.

LINDA a traveller!—It was an era in her young existence—never having gone beyond the limits of her own neighbourhood. Her father was the companion of her journey, and no longer frozen, benumbed by the presence of his wife, the fountain of his heart began to play once more, and throw out the bright waters to the sun. Linda had forgotten how pleasant, how even gay her father could be; she had been so long accustomed to see him in a state of mental and moral paralysis. Ah, Mr. Walton!—these are silver days in the dark cycle of your present existence. Your young daughter is at your side, and you are not afraid to show how much you love her. You will read no reproof in that blue, smiling sky, those green, rolling woods. Nature is a kind mother, and fills with sweet thoughts and pure affections the heart that yields to her maternal influence.

Linda wondered she could ever have felt unhappy in a world so beautiful, with a father so kind, a spirit so elastic, and a future so bright with hope. Even the image of her formidable step-mother was so softened by distance as to be deprived of half its terrors. The fearful scourge—the wearying patch-work—the dark, raftered room—the lonely moonlight pilgrimage—seemed like dreams to her now, as they came back to her recollection. Sometimes she would gaze abroad with rapture, when some peculiarly beautiful feature in the landscape arrested her attention—some clustering grove of willow oaks, in the centre of a low, grassy plain—their rich, pendant foliage, reflected in a glassy pool beneath; or, more frequently, the long, stately, symmetrical colonnades of pine, with their deep-green “contiguity of shade,” and bright,

luxuriant undergrowth. Then, wearied with the intensity of her gaze, she would lean back in the carriage, and, closing her eyes, build those aerial fabrics, those cities of the future, in which imagination loves to revel. Her school-days!—what rich fruitage would she garner up, during the next four years, with which to enrich all coming time. How faithfully would she remember the instructions of the beloved Aristides, and plume, as he had directed, her young wings for heaven! Then, when she came forth into the world, and was allowed to take possession of her inherited wealth, what a kind, vigilant mistress would she be to the poor slaves committed to her care! How tenderly would she sweeten the bitter cup of servitude! how carefully minister to the wants of the body and the soul! Her faithful Judy, too, would be with her again, who should have a nice white cabin of her own, furnished with every comfort, where her days should flow on in tranquillity and happiness.

Near the close of their second day's journey, Mr. Walton, fearing they might not reach their stopping-place before night, told the driver to urge the horses faster, as there was no moon, and he had been told there was a dangerous precipice on the road they were to pass. Tom was a skilful, experienced driver, and had carried his master and former mistress safely over many a rough and difficult pass; but he had one failing, of which his master was not aware—he loved an exhilarating glass, and, when travelling, the temptation beset him with double strength. At the last cabin, where he had paused to water the horses, he had unfortunately found too hospitable accommodations for himself, and had mounted the box in high spirits, which needed not the spur of his master's exciting words.

"An't the horses going very fast?" cried Linda, looking out on the precipitous sides of the road, which now went winding round on the brow of a steep hill.

"Oh, Tom knows what he's about," answered Mr. Walton, with that habitual easiness of mind which did not like the trouble of anticipating danger. "He's managed these horses from a boy, and they are as gentle as lambs."

But, as the road grew steeper and narrower, and the horses proceeded with a constantly accelerating motion, Mr. Walton was roused to a sense of danger, and, putting his head from the window, commanded Tom to drive more slowly. He did not know the potent draught in which Tom had indulged, which deprived him of the power to guide and restrain the animals, who were only obeying the irresistible power of gravitation in pursuing so furiously their downward course.

"Father, let us jump out," exclaimed the terrified Linda; "we shall be dashed to pieces! Look at that frightful cliff oh! father—see where we are going."

Mr. Walton gave one glance at the frightful cliff which they were approaching with such fearful velocity, and felt indeed that they were lost. With a cry of agony, he clasped his young daughter closely in his arms, and, closing his eyes, tried to shut out the vision—the horrible vision of her mangled limbs—her crushed and bleeding body! At this moment a youth was seen darting with almost lightning speed across the fields. He leaped the zigzag railing, sprang over the rocky chasm by the way-side, into the road, right in front of the foaming, galloping, terrific-looking animals. Linda, who, unlike her father, had been gazing with wild intensity abroad, taking in the whole terror of the scene, beheld this figure flying with a speed that almost mocked her sight. She felt a sudden jerk of the carriage, which threw them on the opposite seat; but she could no longer see the brave, young stranger who was periling his life for their safety. She did not see him dragged along over the rocks and sands, still holding the fiery steed he had caught by the bridle rein, with his young, powerful arm, till the beast himself was overthrown,

and they rolled together in the dust. The other horse, feeling itself thus suddenly checked, burst the shackles that bound it to its fellow, and plunged headlong down the precipice, on the very brink of which they were arrested. The carriage was upset as the horse leaped from the harness; but Linda and her father were saved unhurt. Linda was the first to spring up and think of their deliverer. She alone had seen him, and knew the cause of their preservation. The animal lay with frothing mouth and panting limbs, exhausted by its late fury. Prostrate by its side, with his right arm under the horse's head, and covered with its flowing mane, appeared a figure, so youthful it seemed incredible that its strength had been their salvation.

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Walton, "has that boy saved us?"

"Yes, father," said Linda, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly, "he's saved us, but he is killed himself!"

Mr. Walton knelt down over the youth, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"I am not killed," said the youth, faintly; "but my arm—if I could only release it from under the horse's head."

It seemed a formidable task to approach the animal that had lately exhibited such tremendous power; but the moment Mr. Walton touched it, and endeavoured to move its head from the arm of the youth, it recognised its master's presence, and rolled it gently aside. The youth endeavoured to move his arm, but in vain. An expression of acute pain crossed his features.

"It is broken," said he, and his lips turned of ashy paleness; "but if you will help me, sir, I can rise."

Mr. Walton put one arm around the youth's shoulders, and was endeavouring to lift him, when he sprang up with surprising agility, though his cheek grew pale, and the nervous contraction of his brow indicated great suffering.

"What shall we do? What can be done to relieve you?" exclaimed Mr. Walton, looking despairingly on his broken carriage, the remains of the noble animal quivering at the foot of the precipice, and then around on the woods and fields, where he could discern no trace of a habitation, though the shadows of twilight were beginning to fall.

Linda, on beholding the fainting countenance of their deliverer, remembered the basket of cakes and cordials which had been put in the carriage for their own refreshment. She searched, and found one bottle unbroken, and filling with its contents a silver cup, ran forward and gave it to her father.

"Here, father," said she, earnestly, "this will do him good."

The youth was unconscious till this moment of the sweet young life he had preserved. He smiled on the little maiden as he drank the cordial, and the colour came back to his lips.

"My mother lives within half a mile of this spot," said he. "I can show you the way, sir, if this little Miss can walk so far."

"But what shall I do with this poor creature?" cried Mr. Walton, looking sorrowfully on the exhausted horse. "I do not like to leave him."

"I will send a negro back to bring him," replied the youth; "I do not think he is injured."

"Hallo, Massa!—Bless a God you alive, and little Missus, too!" exclaimed a well-known voice, and Tom came panting along, his clothes covered with dust and sand, his hat-crown smashed in, and a look of dolorous sheepishness and remorse furtively glancing from his white-rimmed, rolling eyes. In the excitement of the scene, they had forgotten Tom, who had been thrown off, far back; and, owing no doubt to the relaxed state of his system, the non-resisting muscles, which intoxication causes, had escaped with no other injury than a few bruises. Unconscious that he was the agent of their

threatened destruction, they greeted him with a joyful welcome, and as a great help in their time of need. "Awful times, Massa—awful times!" said Tom, casting a glance of rueful penitence on the noble victim now stretched in the immobility of death.

"Help the living, Tom; there is no use in mourning for the dead," said his master, pointing to the animal near them.

In a moment the horse was on its feet, shaking the dust from its silky sides, and tossing its disordered mane. Mr. Walton proposed that the young man should be lifted on the horse, and be led by Tom to his own home, whither they would follow. But this he opposed so earnestly, insisting that Linda should ride, as he was perfectly able to walk, that Mr. Walton was obliged to yield. Linda refused, also, having received too terrible a fright to trust herself on the back of such a lion-like beast; so they walked on together, leaving Tom to guard the trunks till some vehicle should be sent to remove them.

Poor Linda, weakened from her fright, and weary from her long ride, could scarcely drag one foot after the other; but she would not complain. She thought of the heroic sufferer, walking by her side, with his broken arm—broken for them, and she longed to share his pain, if she could not relieve it. Sometimes he would turn frightfully pale, and lean his head against her father's shoulder with a quick shudder; then, declaring himself better, walk on with renewed speed. He could not be older than Robert, and he was scarcely as tall. Linda noticed that his dress was not as fine as Robert's, for it was evidently of domestic manufacture; but there was sufficient gentility in his bearing to give her the impression that he was a gentleman's son. She hoped he was poor; then she would beg her father to let her give him half her fortune for saving their lives. "And that," thought the grateful, generous, little heiress, "would not half pay him."

How long a half mile seems when one is travelling a new path, with weary step, in the midst of fast-deepening shadows and deeper anxieties !

"There is my mother's house," said the youth, in a faint voice, pointing with his left hand to a neat log-cabin, whose windows, illuminated by the blaze of pine-knots—those glorious flambeaus of the South—shone hospitably on the dejected strangers. A female figure, with one arm raised above its head, shading the face, and looking earnestly down the path, stood in the door-way.

"Roland, is that you?" inquired a mild, anxious voice.

"Yes, mother ; but make haste and come to me—I'm very faint," and the suffering boy, having fulfilled the task for which he had girded his failing strength, staggered and fell. After he had raised and assisted in bearing him into the house, laying him on the neat, white bed which stood in the room which they entered, Mr. Walton explained to the alarmed and distressed mother, the danger they had incurred, and the heroic and almost miraculous manner in which her son had rescued them from destruction.

In spite of her distress and pre-occupation of mind, Mrs. Lee, (such was the name of Roland's mother,) could not help looking admiringly on the little maiden, who exhibited such animated sympathy, and such earnest desires to assist in Roland's recovery.

While the mother was seeking more active restoratives, and her father was unloosening his collar and vest, Linda wet her handkerchief with water and bathed his forehead, till the drops trickled through his thick chesnut hair, on the snow white pillow. The fear that he was going to die, and die for them, filled her with intolerable anguish. The pale, meek, anxious face of his mother would haunt her for ever. She looked as if she had seen sorrow already, and she knew it would kill her to lose her son. When Roland began to re-

vive, and saw those large, pitying, tearful, brown eyes gazing so wistfully on his face, and felt that soft, delicate, little hand bathing his head, it was no wonder he felt bewildered and knew not where he was. Starting, he tried to raise himself on his elbow, but groaning with pain, fell back. There was no physician within the distance of six miles; and Roland suffered many hours with his swollen and inflamed arm, though after the first involuntary groan no expression of suffering escaped his lips. It was not till a late hour that Tom arrived with the trunks, and Linda, too much excited to sleep, was persuaded to retire to bed.

The travellers were detained several days at the cottage of Mrs. Lee, till the carriage was repaired, another horse purchased, and the inflammation of Roland's arm reduced, so that no danger could be apprehended from his case. Linda could not bear to see his arm bound up in torturing-looking splinters, but he told her they did not hurt him, and that he should soon shake them off again. As for staying in bed, gentle and obedient to his mother in every thing else, she could not persuade him to do that. He even went abroad with Linda, to show her where some of the prettiest wild flowers were blooming, and the young mocking-birds were making their nests.

"This shall be yours," said he, selecting one hidden in a sweet, little, vine-wreathed hollow, "and when the little birds are fledged I'll make a cage for them, and take care of them, and call them after your name."

"You are very good to think enough about me for that," said Linda; "but I wish you would tell me of something I could do for you, who have done so much for us. If I were going home I would have a tree planted and call it after your name,—but that would be nothing after all."

She longed to tell him what a fortune she had, and how gladly she would give him half, but a native feeling of deli-

cacy, a fear that it would sound like boasting, a dread of wounding his pride, restrained her.

"I am sure I've done nothing worth praising," cried Roland, colouring with pleasure, mingled with embarrassment, at the earnest expressions of gratitude she again and again repeated. "I could not help what I did, and there is no merit in it."

"Could not help it, Roland?"

"No! I was walking through the field and caught a glimpse of the horses rushing along towards the precipice, and I knew there must be some one in the carriage who would be dashed to pieces over the rocks. I could no more help running and leaping the fence and ditch, than I could help breathing in the living air. I felt as strong as a lion, and had there been twenty horses instead of one, I believe I could have stopped them all. I didn't know whom I saved, so I'm sure I deserve no thanks."

"Yes, but you do though," answered the grateful child, "and I'll thank you and bless you as long as I live. I wish you were my brother instead of Robert, and that you were going to college, and that we were going to meet at home, four years from this time."

"I wish so too," said Roland. "But who is Robert?"

Then Linda sat down by him on the grass, and told him all about her home and childhood, except her own wrongs. She dwelt rapturously on her school-days, and described Aristides Longwood so perfectly and minutely that Roland said he should know him if he met in China. In return for her confidence, Roland told her his family history.

His father was dead and all his brothers and sisters. He was "the only son of his mother, and she a widow." His father was a planter of considerable property, but he had lost it almost all by a security debt. His misfortunes preyed upon his spirits, so that he wasted away and died, and his mother,

collecting the few negroes that remained to her, retired to the log-cabin among the hills, where they now lived. He had been to school a good deal, but he was now staying at home with his mother, and assisting her on the farm.

"I have always longed to go to sea," said the boy, kindling with enthusiasm as he proceeded; "I never could read of the ocean and the great vessels sailing on its bosom, but my blood thrilled in my veins. Oh! it must be a glorious thing to be away out on the ocean, out of sight of land, nothing but sky and water all round you; heaving upon the billows, heaving again and rocking like a cradle; and the tall mast bending, then righting in the storm."

"Would you like to have a ship of your own?" cried Linda, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "I will get father to buy you one!"

"Thank you," said Roland, laughing; "it would be a great present, but I would not leave my mother to go so far from her; and she has a great horror of the sea. But I will tell you what I do mean to do:—you know what large rivers we have, almost as grand as the sea; well, one of these days, when you are a young lady, and going about in search of pleasure, you may sail in Captain Lee's boat on the Alabama or Mississippi, for a captain I mean to be before I die, and then my mother can be with me."

"But you cannot be a captain all at once, can you?" asked Linda, sympathizing in his enthusiasm about the sea and the great rivers; for she too loved the blue waters, and they seemed a part of her own soul.

"No—I must take my degrees first. I'll serve as a cabin-boy, clerk, pilot, till I get the command of a boat. I have a birch canoe in that creek yonder, which you see shining through the trees, and if I could only use my right arm I would row you merrily in it, and you should see what a sailor I am. I love to go out in it a moonlight night, and lying down in the

bottom of the boat, let it go where it pleases, the waters making such a sweet song about my ears all the while. I have taken my first degrees already, you see."

"But what if your boat should blow up, when you are a captain,—that would be dreadful."

"Yes; but a carriage may run towards a precipice, and the lightning may strike, and the fever destroy you on your own bed. I believe I had rather be blown up in the air, with a good many bearing me company, and have the waters, that I love so well, for my grave, than lie down all alone in the cold ground, shut up in a dark, narrow coffin."

This reminded Linda of a story that Mr. Longwood had told her of a great barbarian of the name of Alaric, who had a mountain stream turned back from its course, leaving the channel bare, where his grave was dug, and after he was buried the waters were made to flow back for ever over his body. Roland kindled with enthusiasm at this recital, and envied the barbarian king such a magnificent grave.

Linda repeated to her father all that Roland had told her, and begged him to buy him a boat and make him captain, as soon as he was a few years older.

Though Mr. Walton's gratitude was not quite so uncalculating as Linda's, he had the interests of his young preserver deeply at heart. He had a long conversation with him, in which he urged upon him the acceptance of a gift, which would assist him in his advancement and free him from all fear of pecuniary embarrassment. But the independent and high-minded boy, with modest firmness, declined the proffered boon.

"If my mother should ever be in distress, or want beyond my power to relieve, then," said Roland, his fine countenance lighted up with grateful emotion, "I will apply to you, as my first, best friend."

Mr. Walton would have pressed the same offer on the mother, but there was a quiet dignity and refinement of manners

possessed by Mrs. Lee; a gentle reserve that shrunk from any allusion to her domestic interests. It was evident that something of the pride of better days clung to her; that pride which a sensitive person is so fearful of wounding.

The night before their departure, while he was meditating and trying to mature some plans by which he could remunerate them, without paining the delicacy he respected, he noticed a large, old-fashioned, brazen-clasped Bible, lying on the mantel-piece—probably an heir-loom of the family, from the venerable antiquity of its appearance. After they had separated for the night, he returned to the room for some article he had left, and saw Mrs. Lee seated at a table, reading intently in “that old-fashioned Bible, which lay on the stand.” Softly closing the door, he waited till he heard her quiet footsteps retreating to her own room; then returning, he put a hundred dollar bill between the leaves of the Bible, where the widow’s mark was placed; and closing the brazen clasps, laid it back upon the shelf. What a different man was Mr. Walton, when the pale, stony eyes of his wife were not resting, like two dull, heavy weights, on his soul!

The next morning the travellers stood by the door, ready to depart. Linda’s eyes were brimming with tears. The heroism of Roland, and the gentle hospitality of his mother, had endeared them both to her warm heart. Never could she forget that dear log-cabin among the hills.

Roland looked very sober; he scrutinized Tom with a keen eye as he mounted the box, for, more quick-discerning than Mr. Walton, he had detected the odour of whisky in his breath on the night of the disaster.

“Don’t be afraid, young Massa,” said Tom, winking his eyes knowingly. “Tom knows what he’s about this time. Long as he think of that arm of yours, all splintered up, he have enough to make him scary. Never mind, young Massa, all safe now.”

Kind adieus were exchanged—the carriage rolled slowly from the door. Still, long as the cottage was in view, Linda cast her tearful glances backward, and when she could discern nothing else, the white scarf that supported Roland's broken arm, gleaming through the distance, told her that he was yet ingering on the threshold.

CHAPTER VII.

LINDA at a boarding-school—another era in her young existence. But let us describe *Rose Bower*, for such was the name of Mrs. Reveire's Seminary of Learning,—a large, white mansion, with a pillared piazza surrounding the building. It was situated in the midst of an ample, green yard, margined with rose trees, whose profusion and great luxuriance had given name to the classic institution. The thick, clustering multiflora and nondescript wreathed the pillars of the piazza, and a thick hedge of Cherokee roses ran around the interior of the wall. The want of shade might have been objected to this beautiful building, had not a thick grove of young oaks, adjoining the yard, wooed the eye to repose in its cool depths. Many a rustic seat, placed beneath the trees, showed the use to which they were appropriated by the young students of *Rose Bower*. It was now the season of roses, and every bush was glowing with blossoms, every gale was redolent with their balmy breath.

“Oh, what a beautiful place!” exclaimed Linda, when it first met her eager gaze. “I know I shall be happy here!” and “I know I shall be happy here,” again repeated she to herself, when she beheld the lady to whose care she was committed, the elegant and accomplished Mrs. Reveire

With a sweet benignity of countenance that softened the dignity of her mien, she received her young charge, kindly holding her by the hand, and smoothing back the bright ringlets from her downcast eyes.

"Your daughter appears very young to be left so far from home," said the lady, in a gentle tone. "But we will try to keep her from being home-sick with us."

"I am not afraid of being home-sick with you," cried Linda, earnestly; then, blushing at her own warmth, she again bent her head till the ringlets shaded her eyes.

"I think you have brought me a treasure in your daughter," said Mrs. Reveire, when Linda had retired to change her travelling apparel; "she has one of the most intelligent, ingenuous countenances I ever saw."

The father was touched—he became eloquent in the praises of his child; but Mrs. Reveire, who read characters by a kind of intuition, needed not a parent's recommendation to interest her in her new pupil. Her heart had gone forth to meet her without waiting for her credentials, and she knew that Linda's met it, at least half-way. There was an expression in the beautiful eyes of the child that seemed to say, "I want you to love me, for I have not always known what love is."

At length the bell sounded long and loud, to announce that supper was ready. Mrs. Reveire led Linda through a long passage, down a winding flight of stairs, into a large basement hall, where two tables were set parallel, the whole length of the room. Linda paced with timid steps the long, brick-paved hall, and took the place assigned her by Mrs. Reveire. Another long peal rung through the house; then came a rushing, rustling sound through the passage and on the stairway, and the young ladies of the institute came in two by two, and took their stations at the table. There were about fifty; but there was no confusion in arranging them, as they all knew their appointed places.

"Young ladies," said Mrs. Reveire, looking kindly at Linda, "you have a new companion in Miss Linda Walton. I bespeak for her your kindest feelings and best offices, as she is very young, and knows not yet, as you have once felt, the loneliness of the stranger's heart."

Smiling glances from a myriad of bright eyes answered this affectionate address, and Linda smiled again. Thus a kind of electrical communication was established between the strangers, seldom known after the years of childhood and early youth. Linda could not eat; every thing around her was so novel and exciting. The lively clatter of knives and forks—the low chatter of mingling voices—the sight of so many strange faces—quite bewildered her. Mrs. Reveire did not require her pupils to eat in unbroken silence, as "if funeral baked meats" were placed before them; but she did require strict propriety and gentility of deportment. If the laugh was too loud, or the voice too rough in its tones, a word or look, directed towards the offending party recalled them to order.

When supper was over, they retired in regular succession, as they came, only one young lady lingering behind, whom Mrs. Reveire introduced to Linda as her room-mate, by the name of Emily Chestney. She was a tall, stately looking girl, with very black hair and eyes, and a skin like polished marble. Linda thought she looked cold and haughty, and was sorry Mrs. Reveire had not given her as a companion one of those younger, merrier-looking girls, who looked so roguish and smiling upon her across the table. She was not required to study that night; but sat with her father and Mrs. Reveire in the parlour till the ringing of the nine-o'clock bell, when another flight of stairs was ascended, another long passage threaded, and she found herself in her own dormitory, one of a long suite of apartments, so arranged as to accommodate two pupils in each.

"Oh! how nice and comfortable!" ejaculated Linda, looking at the pure white walls, neat wardrobe, and bright-coloured curtains. "Are all the rooms like this?"

"Yes, exactly," replied Emily; "you must remember that this is No. 12; for, if you should chance to forget, you may lose your way and never be able to find it."

"It will take me a long time to remember all the new things I see here," answered Linda. "But I'm sure of one thing—I cannot help being happy with such a sweet lady as Mrs. Reveire. Do you not love her very much?"

"I like her better than any teacher I ever knew; but I'm tired of going to school, for all that. I think I'm old enough to stop."

"Yes," said Linda, innocently, "I should think so, too."

"Do you think I look so very old?" asked the young lady, in a displeased tone. "I'm only sixteen."

"No," replied Linda, timidly; for she felt she had given offence; "but you are so tall, and look so much like a lady—somehow—I thought——"

"No matter," interrupted Emily, "I don't care how I look; but I know how I feel; and I'm determined to be a young lady in earnest before the year is out."

She gave her books a sudden push, and bid Linda prepare for bed, as their candles would be taken out in a short time, whether they were ready or not. Linda's head was soon quietly resting on her pillow, the candle was taken out, and Emily lay down by her side. She was weary and drowsy, and was just falling asleep, when a tittering noise in the passage awakened her. The door softly opened, and the next moment something heavy was thrown upon her head.

"Mercy, what's that?" exclaimed Linda, starting up in alarm.

"It is one of the wild girls in the next room," replied Emily. "They are throwing their shoes at your head. That

is the way I was greeted the first night I came. Take no notice of them, or they will do something more annoying.'

Linda remained perfectly still, though she felt a pair of cold, wet hands clasping her feet.

"Let's tickle her," whispered a voice, at the foot of the bed.

"No," whispered another, "she will scream, and Mrs. Reveire will hear her. We'll only tie her feet to the bed-post."

"If you do," said Emily, "I will tell Mrs. Reveire myself. You had better go to bed, Kate Miller, and save yourself a mark of disgrace in the morning."

Another suppressed titter, and all was still again.

"This is one of the ceremonies of your initiation," said Emily. "Be thankful it is no worse."

Linda was not at all pleased, and began to think she might find some thorns amid the sweet roses of the bower. She became wakeful, and it seemed that Emily was so too; for she rose soon, and, taking a candle from her trunk, lighted it with a match, and placed it on the table; then taking a large, thick shawl, she hung it carefully over the curtained window, so as to exclude every ray of light. Linda did not move, but watched her movements with great curiosity, wondering what she was going to do that required so much caution. Emily seated herself at the table, and opening her portfolio took out letter after letter, and read them with the most profound attention. Then she drew paper, pen, and ink towards her, and began to write. Sometimes she would pause, and fix her large, bright eyes on the opposite wall so intently, that Linda almost expected to see two black spots left on its whiteness; then, bending over her paper, her pen would make that quick, scratching sound which impresses the listener with such a grand idea of the writer. Linda continued to gaze upon her mysterious companion from under the shadow of the bed-cover, till Emily's features gradually became pale and misty, the lineaments of her figure melted into the white back-ground,

on which it was defined, and vanished away. The young traveller was asleep.

It was some time before the inexperienced Linda could understand the various little deceptive arts practised by many of the pupils, to elude the vigilance of their teachers. Possessed of the most perfect ingenuousness of character herself, she loathed the petty subterfuges which she daily witnessed. Becoming every day more and more attached to Mrs. Reveire, she conformed to all her rules with reverential obedience, and applied herself diligently to her studies, from the double motive of pleasing her instructress and improving herself. The wild girls nick-named her at first the "*little parson*," and passed upon her many a practical joke; but when they found that, though silent and studious at her desk, and patient and persevering at her tasks, she was one of the swiftest runners, most agile jumpers, and merriest laughers, when they assembled at play-hours, in the young oaken grove, she became a general favourite, and no amusement was considered perfect without the participation of Linda Walton.

The child who is favourite of both teachers and pupils, must combine many rare qualities. Linda was happy in the consciousness of fulfilling her duty, and of being beloved by those around her. At home she was a Picciola, blooming in the dungeon's gloom, fair and sweet, in spite of the chilling influences that surrounded her; here she was a flower in the midst of flowers, bathed in sunshine, and rejoicing in the breeze.

It was a lovely sight when the young inmates of Rose Bower, released from the restraints and duties of the day, gathered together, just before sunset, to revel in the joy of freedom. Here a graceful group might be seen, reclining in all the abandonment of childish ease on the grass; there, a merrier band, chasing each other under the flying rope; some walking more soberly, with arm interlaced in arm, or passed

fondly round the girlish waist, would seek some remote corner, and converse earnestly and confidently with each other. Sometimes a sulky, discontented-looking being, would stray off by herself, refusing to share in those pleasures which her own envy and jealousy embittered. But these solitary figures were very rare. To the passer-by, the oak grove presented as fair a spectacle as the garden of Eden—so many living rose-buds bursting into fresher, fairer life—so many bounding forms, revelling in the mere joy of existence—so many bright ringlets tossing in the breeze, and so many starry eyes flashing upon each other rays of gladness and mirth—how could it be otherwise than a charming scene?

But though the casual observer could detect no flaw in this sparkling jewelry, there were some false gems there, unworthy of their setting. It pained Linda when she became aware of any mischievous plot, which she knew Mrs. Reveire would disapprove; but, though she would not participate in their offences, she scorned to betray them.

Emily was a mystery to her which she could not unravel. Frequently she would rise after all the dormitories were quiet, and, lighting her secret candle, write as if her whole soul were engaged in the task. Linda knew it was wrong, for it was in direct violation of Mrs. Reveire's rules, and she wished she had a different room-mate. She knew, too, that the letters thus secretly written were not given to Mrs. Reveire to be placed in the post-office, as the regulations of the school required. Where, then, were they deposited?

One morning Linda noticed the washerwoman, who came for their clothes, in a long conference with Emily. The latter was placing a letter in her bosom as Linda entered the room, and her face was flushed with excitement. Linda had conceived a particular dislike to this woman, who was a free negro of the name of Peggy. She was astonished at the extreme familiarity to which the young ladies admitted her, and the

presents they lavished upon her. She scarcely ever left their apartments without bearing with her some article of clothing which she was very careful to conceal from the searching eye of Mrs. Reveire.

Peggy's cabin was situated back of the beautiful grove we have so often mentioned, entirely concealed by its luxuriant foliage. One evening, Kate Miller, the wild girl who had threatened to tie Linda's feet on the night of her arrival, drew Linda apart from her companions, and winding her arm around her waist, asked her if she did not want to go and see what a pretty little cottage Peggy had.

"But does Mrs. Reveire allow you to go there?" asked the conscientious Linda.

"Oh, she don't care where we go, if we keep within school boundaries, and the lot where Peggy lives belongs to her. All you have to do is to jump over this fence and you will be there in the twinkling of an eye."

Notwithstanding Linda's dislike of Peggy, she thought her cottage looked very inviting through the green trees, with its white-washed lattice, and neat little porch; and with the natural curiosity of childhood, was glad to peep within.

As they approached the door, she was surprised by hearing the hum of many laughing voices.

"Oh, I dont want to go in," said Linda, trying to release her arm from Kate, who only grasped it the tighter. "There are so many people there—I know Mrs. Reveire will not like it."

"Mrs. Reveire will not like it!" exclaimed Kate, mocking Linda's deprecating tones. "I don't care whether she likes it or not. She'll never find it out unless you tell her. Here girls," she cried in a louder voice, "come and help,—I've got a new member of our secret club; come quickly."

Half a dozen familiar faces appeared at the door, laughing violently.

"What! the *little parson*!—well done. This is capital. We must make her say grace for us."

Linda struggled and entreated in vain. They seized her by main force, and whirled her into the centre of the room, while two of the girls stood in the doorway to preclude the possibility of her egress.

"Welcome to Liberty Hall, Miss Linda!" cried Kate, clapping her hands exultingly. "You are one among us now, and there is no use in being sanctified any longer."

Linda gazed around her in unutterable astonishment. One pretty, delicate girl was stooping over a hot fire, though it was a warm summer eve, busily engaged in frying eggs; another was turning some rashers of bacon, with a face the colour of crimson; and a third was stirring a pot of custard, as if her life depended on the act. Bread and butter, cake and pickles were scattered over a table, to which Kate Miller dragged the shrinking Linda.

"Here, honey, help yourself. Plenty of every thing in Liberty Hall. Peggy serves us like a princess. I mean she shall be queen of May next year."

"I dont want any thing to eat," cried Linda, indignantly, "but what I find on Mrs Reveire's table. I am sure she doesn't starve us, that we should come and eat in a negro hovel."

"Young Missus hold her head mighty high," muttered Peggy, who sat in a corner, smoking her long pipe, whose fumes were mingling with the odour of the viands. "Me no care. Bigger ladies than she glad enough to come and see Peggy."

"Hear! hear!" exclaimed Kate; "the little parson is preaching. She is holding forth against the sin of gluttony, but she's longing all the time for some of the goodies. Come, Linda, this is all pretence; make yourself at home. You don't know what fun we have here."

"No, let her go and tell Mrs. Reveire. That will be better fun for her," cried one of Kate's companions.

"I have never betrayed my companions," said Linda, tears of wounded feeling starting into her eyes.

"No, that she hasn't," interrupted Kate, frankly. "I am not afraid of her doing any thing so mean."

Linda remarked, for the first time, that Emily Chestney was present, seated at a back window, with her usual cold and abstracted air.

"You here, Emily!" exclaimed Linda. "I wouldn't have believed it."

The marble white of Emily's cheek turned a bright crimson. "I did not come to eat," replied she, contemptuously.

"Mercy!" exclaimed one of the door-keepers, "if here isn't Mrs. Reveire!"

With one bound she sprang under the table, making a terrible crash among Peggy's china. Fried eggs, boiled custard, and broiling ham, all leaped into the coals. Every chair was upset in the running and confusion which followed this unexpected announcement. Linda stood still in the centre of the apartment, and hers was the first figure which met the calm, but indignant glance of Mrs. Reveire.

"Linda, I little expected to see you here," cried she, in a voice which she in vain endeavoured to render tranquil. "And Emily, too; the dignified and lady-like Emily Chestney! In whom can I place confidence?"

Linda bent her head and wept bitterly.

"Linda didn't come of her own will," exclaimed Kate Miller, boldly: "I dragged her in, and almost pulled my arms off in doing it."

"I am glad, Kate, you have the redeeming virtue of candour left," replied Mrs. Reveire, gravely. "Linda, I rejoice that I have not been deceived in you. My feelings are sufficiently wounded already. Grateful I am, that drop of bitter-

ness is not infused into my cup of care. As for you, unprincipled woman," added she, turning to Peggy, her usually benignant countenance flashing with indignation, "where are the spoils you have hidden, the garments you have bribed these young ladies to bestow upon you, by pampering their lowest propensities, and teaching them the vilest deceit? I have discovered the shameless traffic you have been carrying on; in time, I trust, to prevent its worst consequences."

Peggy began to mutter that she was free, and that she never asked the young ladies to give her their clothes; but Mrs. Reveire commanded her with so much dignity to produce the ill-gotten spoils she had so long been secreting, that she dared not disobey. Hauling a large basket from under the bed, she displayed a quantity of dresses, aprons, skirts, &c., which filled even the ringleaders of this secret club with astonishment.

"Young ladies," cried Mrs. Reveire, to the pale and trembling culprits surrounding that ominous-looking basket, "if this poor, ignorant negro deserves so severe a rebuke, what can I say to you, whose minds are enlightened by education; whose hearts have been softened by the tenderest cares? Is this the reward of my affection? the return for my watchful days, my almost sleepless nights? Have I ever imposed a restraint that was not for your good? Have I ever denied you food that you should gather in this low place and share the hospitality of a hireling? What would your parents say if they entered at this moment, and witnessed the scene now presented to my eyes. Unhappy children! you are bringing discredit on an institution which has long been my pride and delight. You are planting the thorns of ingratitude in the roses of my bower."

The heads of the culprits drooped lower and lower; sobs burst forth; the wild spirit of fun and misrule was subdued by the calm, earnest, affectionate accents of her whom they

loved, in spite of all their folly and disobedience. Linda ran and threw her arms around Mrs. Reveire.

"Oh, dear, best Mrs. Reveire, pray forgive them this time. They are very, very sorry. It is from the love of fun they have done it."

"Fun is a low word, my child; an excuse for the most grovelling actions. Those who have no higher object in their amusements, generally have recourse to the lowest and most degraded auxiliaries. I would have the young ladies committed to my care cultivate a spirit of refinement in their most unguarded hours, their wildest moments of recreation. I would have them remember that they were brought here to receive the education of ladies, and that I do not divide my authority with the ignorant and debased."

She spoke with so much majesty that Linda, fearful that she had offended, involuntarily relaxed the soft pressure of her arms, and turned aside her tearful eyes.

"Nay, my sweet child," said she, drawing her once more closely to her, "I am not insensible to your touching appeal. My own heart is only too ready to grant your request. But I have a duty to fulfil, and these young ladies must not mingle with their associates till I am assured, by their penitence and good behaviour, that contamination will not result from their companionship."

Many a fair head looked down from Rose Bower on the novel procession that issued from Peggy's cottage that evening. First, Peggy marched forth, an immense basket towering like a turret on her head; then the delinquents followed, two and two, hanging their heads like bulrushes; lastly, Mrs. Reveire, with Emily and Linda on either side. There was something so graceful and dignified about this lady, it was impossible to associate any thing ridiculous with her, in whatever situation she might be placed; and Emily, though her lip quivered, walked by her instructress with a step as firm and

a brow as lofty. The culprits were dismissed to their rooms, where they were told to remain until personally summoned,—all but Emily, whom Mrs. Reveire led to her own apartment.

“Why do you bring me here?” asked she, proudly, “I am willing to submit to the same punishment as my companions.”

“I do not wish to punish so much as to convince,” said the lady. “You were not led by the love of fun, if I must use so low an expression. You have other motives, Emily; motives which, however studiously you conceal from me, your delegated friend, are yet known to me, and fill me with the deepest anxiety.”

“Oh! madam—what is it you mean?”

“You are carrying on a secret correspondence. You have intrusted Peggy with the care of your letters; you have committed your reputation into the hands of a servant, and closed your heart to one whom you would find as ready to sympathize in your affections as assist you in your duties, provided, always, those affections were flowing in a legitimate channel.”

“Oh, madam!” again ejaculated Emily, covering her face with her hands and bursting into a passionate flood of tears. She wept as only the proud can weep, when the barriers of their pride are swept aside. Mrs. Reveire sat down by her side, and put her arms kindly round her. Her own voice faltered—her own eyes were dim with tears.

“I grieve to see you suffer, Emily; and would gladly spare you the pain and humiliation you now endure. If you will grant me your full confidence, I will endeavour to save you from exposure and shame; and, if possible, promote your future happiness. Though I have learned to discipline my passions and bring them under the control of reason and judgment, I have not forgotten the memory of my youthful

days, or the temptations to which a warm, romantic imagination exposes its possessor."

"Oh, Mrs. Reveire! how kind, how more than kind you are! I am not worthy of such goodness, but I can appreciate it as it deserves. Ask me any thing—every thing; I will have no more concealments. I have been too wretched in the practice of deceit."

Mrs. Reveire gathered from Emily's broken recital, that she was betrothed to a young man whom she had known from earliest childhood, but to whom her father objected, because he was not rich. She had been sent to a distant school that she might be removed from his vicinity, and positively forbidden to have any correspondence with him. Through Peggy, she had received his letters from the office, directed to a fictitious name, and sent her own in return.

"And now," said she, after acknowledging the full extent of her transgressions, "you know how basely I have deceived you, can you extend to me your forgiveness? It is in your power to destroy my happiness for ever. You can inform my father of my disobedience, and he will remove me still farther from all I love. I have no right to expect any other decision. Even then, I must ever be grateful for the gentleness and forbearance you have exercised towards me."

Emily begged permission to retire a moment to her own chamber, which, having obtained, she brought her portfolio, and laid it in Mrs. Reveire's lap.

"I wish you to read his letters," said she; "perhaps they will plead in my behalf."

Mrs. Reveire read several; not from idle curiosity, but from a desire to learn something of the character of the young man so romantically beloved. She became deeply interested in their contents, for they seemed the transcript of a warm and generous heart, a cultivated and enlightened mind.

"I will write to him myself," said she, "urging him, for

your sake, to discontinue this clandestine correspondence, promising to intercede with your father with all the eloquence of which I am mistress, in behalf of both. You are very young, Emily ; and for every sacrifice you now make to duty, you will be richly rewarded hereafter. If your lover does not value you more for this adherence to principle, he is not worthy of the affection you have bestowed upon him."

Relieved from the intolerable burden of duplicity, Emily's character appeared in a new and interesting light. She manifested the warmest attachment to Mrs. Reveire, and the most affectionate interest in Linda. The cold, abstracted, and statue-like girl, became the kind and sympathizing companion.

It is scarcely necessary to state the manner in which Mrs. Reveire received information of the social meetings at Liberty Hall, or the secret correspondence of Emily. She employed no spies : but when her servants, by whom she was much beloved, saw evil doings and secret machinations, they were sure to give her intelligence.

After this, every thing went on smoothly for a long time at Rose Bower. The gentle firmness of Mrs. Reveire had the happiest influence on the young offenders.

Even the wild Kate Miller began to think there was something low in fun, and that there were pleasures superior to gluttony and deceit.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT a year from the time that Linda became a resident of Rose Rower, the father of Emily came to bear her home. When Mrs. Reveire solicited a private interview with him, Emily trembled, for she felt as if that conversation would decide her destiny.

"My dear Emily," said the lady, entering the chamber of her pupil—"be happy. The extreme worth, growing reputation, and constant attachment of your friend, combined with your own resignation to his will, have induced your father to withdraw his prohibition and consent to your union. I lose a beloved pupil, but I trust society will gain a good, a noble woman."

Emily, with a burst of grateful sensibility, threw her arms around the neck of her instructress. "You have made me what I am. Your tenderness and sympathy, even more than your wisdom and your goodness, have influenced my proud and wayward nature, and softened my heart for the reception of truth and virtue. I owe every thing to you; not only the happiness of my future life, but a mind and heart capable of enjoying it as I ought."

"This is indeed a reward," exclaimed Mrs. Reveire, pressing the grateful girl to her bosom. "This moment would repay me for life-long cares."

The parting between Emily and Linda was tender and affectionate. "We shall meet again," said Emily; "something tells me, we shall meet in after years, and renew the friendship that commenced in sweet Rose Bower. Young as you are, Linda, you have taught me many a lesson of self-control, which I shall not soon forget. You do not know how

much those eyes of yours have said to me in the silence of our little room,—nor how much my conscience has been troubled by their expressive language. Oh! if I ever realize the happiness, whose prospect, even now, makes my heart ache, from the intensity of its bliss, I must find you out, Linda, wherever you may be, and you must come and share my domestic Eden.”

Linda gazed on the glowing countenance of Emily, and wondered what that happiness was, which could thus glorify the human face. She had always thought Emily handsome, now she was transcendently beautiful.

The young heiress tried to shadow forth her own future, and it was strange, that whenever the pencil of imagination began to sketch the outline, the figure of a youth, flying as with the wings of an eagle, or lying, with pale cheek, shaded by the horse’s flowing mane, was sure to occupy the foreground. Then, the vast ocean would appear, with its sea-green waves, crested with dazzling foam, bearing over its undulating surface one stately vessel, and as it bowed its graceful spars and towering mast to the breeze, the same figure, only taller, and more man-like, trod the deck with the step of a master. Or borne on the waters of her own Alabama, or the grand Mississippi, a boat glided majestically along, and through the black volumes of smoke that curled o’er the dark blue current, that same gallant form was seen, presiding, like a young Neptune, over the watery element.

After the departure of Emily, one of the pupils, rather younger than Linda, whose name was Louisa, but universally called Luta, begged for the vacant place in Linda’s apartment. She was one of those sweet, loving beings, that wind like a fragrant garland round the heart. There was the slightest possible obliquity in her soft, violet eye, a half smile on her red, parted lips, and a graceful inclination of the head, like a young flower bending over its stem, that made Luta a most

winning young creature. Her mind was not much expanded. She seemed all heart, born to love and to be loved. One evening, after jumping the rope, she sat on the grass, and leaned her head wearily on Linda's lap. Her cheeks were the hue of scarlet, and her hands were dry and hot. "You have jumped too long, Luta dear," said Linda, laying down her book, and passing her hand tenderly over Luta's burning cheek. "But you must not lie here on this dewy grass, when you are so warm and feverish."

"Oh! my head aches so bad," cried Luta, leaning against Linda, after they both rose from the ground. The girls all left their play and gathered anxiously round their little favourite. They had never heard her complain of illness, and a few moments before she had been in buoyant spirits. Mrs. Reveire thought her indisposition was caused by too violent exercise, and that a night's rest would restore her, but the morning found her feverish and languid. "I did not sleep the whole night," said the patient child, "but I would not complain, for fear of waking Linda."

A physician was summoned, who pronounced it a light case of fever, and left some gentle prescription, but towards night the scarlet cheek, and burning hand, and aching head contradicted the doctor's assertion. Mrs. Reveire became alarmed, and thought it her duty to remove Linda, fearing she might be exposed to the contagion of a malignant disease. She took her aside and expressed her fears and determination.

"Pray don't ask me to leave her," said Linda, entreatingly, "you don't know what a good nurse I will make."

"But your own health, my child. Her disease is assuming an alarming form, and I cannot allow you to be endangered."

"I have no mother, to mourn for me if I should die," uttered Linda, in a sad tone, "as Luta has."

"But you have a kind father."

"Yes! but that isn't like a mother. He might find some

other child to love, and forget me by-and-by." She remembered how her father had seemed to forget her dead mother, and marry that dreadful woman, and thought that the love of man was not enduring.

Mrs. Reveire could not shake Linda's resolution, to remain with her suffering young friend. In the strength of her fearless affection, she was equal to the task. During the night Mrs. Reveire, who had a cot brought in for the purpose, remained in the room, but when the duties of the day required her attendance, Luta was left to the charge of Linda, to whom she clung closer and closer, as she grew more sick and suffering. She would turn the fading violet of her eyes after her stilly footstep, and hold her hand in her burning one, during her short, feverish slumbers, and sometimes she would bend forward and lean her hot head on Linda's bosom, as if she found relief only there.

One night, as she lay in that attitude, so still that Linda supposed she slept, Luta felt tear after tear falling on her dry and throbbing temples. "What makes you cry so, Linda?" asked she, trying to lift her heavy eyes, to the pitying face bending over her.

"I am sorry to see you suffer," replied Linda, drying with her lips the dew of her heart.

"I give you so much trouble, and you are so good. You don't eat or sleep, and I am afraid you will die too."

"Oh! Luta you must not speak so. You will be better soon, and play with us on the green once more."

"No," said the child, laying her head back on the pillow, and fixing her eyes mournfully on Linda's face; "I shall never sit under the oak trees again, or run about on the green grass. I shall never see my father and mother, for they will not reach here till I am dead, for it's a long, long way. Oh! Linda," continued she, gathering strength as the fever burned hotter in her veins, "don't leave me. Stay with me all the time. When

they dress me all in white and lay me in the dark coffin, you must not leave me, for I shall be afraid to be left alone. And when they put me in the cold ground, you must come and lie down by my side."

The fire of delirium began to flash from her eyes. Trembling with alarm, Linda called Mrs. Reveire, and they both watched her till morning light. The doctor now declared the case hopeless, and it was whispered from room to room that Luta was going to die. What solemnity, silence, and gloom pervaded that late busy, joyous household. The light laugh was hushed, the careless footstep stayed, the foolish jest heard no more. Death was entering the house, and

"Never before

Had his skeleton feet ever trod on that floor."

Every little while, a pale face would appear at the half-open door, and a low voice inquire after the invalid, and then another and another, but Linda's pale face was always by the pillow of the dying, and her heart was taking in a solemn lesson.

The delirium of the child assumed a most touching character. "Please tell my father and mother," she would earnestly plead, "that I've been a good girl. I didn't go to Peggy's. You know I didn't, Mrs. Reveire. You would not scatter roses over me when I am dead, if I had. That was an ugly place, and the floor was all swimming with blackness. Tell them too how good Linda is. There's a pair of white wings under her muslin apron, and, when I sleep, she fans me with them, so gently—there—I feel them fluttering now."

Gradually her ravings died away, into the lethargy of approaching dissolution. Then, when she was past all danger of excitement, Mrs. Reveire led in her pupils one by one, to take a farewell look of their dying companion. Poetry and fiction may describe the beauty of death and the loneliness of decay but the solemn reality of the scene belies these gilded pictures

Luta was a lovely child, one of the fairest of that youthful throng. Those half-closed, glazed, and sinking orbs, were they the violet eyes through which the loving heart so sweetly shone? Those parched and blackened lips, those sallow, hueless cheeks, where are now their living roses?

“Behold,” says Mrs. Reveire, solemnly addressing her weeping pupils, “and let the pride of youthful confidence no longer swell your bosom. She is going where we cannot follow her now, though we must one day travel the same lonely path. Alone must she lie down in her grave. Alone must she stand before the bar of God. There, we trust a Saviour’s arm will enfold her—for she was lovely and good. But she must give an account of the golden opportunities of her youth, whether neglected or improved. She hears me not, she heeds me not, her ear is dull, and will soon be closed with the dust of the grave—but you, my beloved ones, whose young hearts still glow with life and hope—for you is the awful lesson written, the warning judgment gone forth.”

“And here is another lesson,” continued she, laying her hand on Linda’s drooping head, “here is one, younger than most of you, who never looked on death before, save one short glimpse of her dead mother’s face. With a martyr’s fearless patience she has travelled step by step with her young companion down the dark valley of the shadow of death. Her arms have enfolded, her love sustained, and her presence cheered, and whether she passes away in the spring-time of life, or lies down in hoary age, God will send his angels to minister unto her, and scatter blessings round her dying couch.” Mrs. Reveire’s feelings became too high-wrought for speech. She knelt by the expiring Luta and bowed her head on the bed-cover.

Youthful maiden—blooming school-girl—for you this scene is portrayed. Have you ever followed the cold body of one of your companions to the narrow house appointed for all the

living? Was it not a sad spectacle, and did you not turn in agony from the bright sun and smiling sky, that seemed to shine in mockery of the dead? Did not your heart sicken to see the flowers, blooming on in unfaded beauty, while the flower of life was blighted for ever?

The morning was cloudless, and the air serene, when a long procession was seen winding along, through a shaded avenue, leading from Rose Bower. Clothed in white, with sable badges, they walked behind the bier, on which, covered with the sweeping, black pall, that solemn banner of the grave, was borne the remains of the young, the innocent, the loving Luta. They laid her down in her last couch, and scattered white roses on the dark coffin-lid. Then, their sweet, sad voices rose in melancholy harmony, chanting a funeral hymn.

"I would not live always—I ask not to stay," repeated in mournful cadence those youthful voices; and the gale, as it sighed through the willows that wept in that place of graves seemed to echo the dirge-like strains—"I would not live always—I ask not to stay."

"Farewell, sweet Luta," said the heart of Linda. "I have stayed by you when you lay in your white shroud and your dark coffin. I must leave you now all alone in the cold grave; though, if God willed it, I would gladly lie down by your side, for the world is a dreary place." And so it seems, when the loved and lovely are taken from the sight, and an awful blank is left; but time passes on, the world begins to look fair again, and the waste places of the heart to bloom once more.

CHAPTER IX.

LINDA on her homeward journey. Two years have passed since she left Pinegrove, and she and Robert are to meet during the holidays at their own home. Little reason as she had to love the home where her stepmother presided, she could not but anticipate with pleasure the return to familiar scenes, associated with the memories of her earliest childhood. She wanted to see how Robert looked now he was nineteen, almost a man, and wondered whether he would treat her as kindly as he did just before they parted. But far more than all, she longed to see the cottage on the hill, where the gentle Mrs. Lee and the brave Roland dwelt.

"Did you stop there as you came?" asked Linda of her father, as they drew near the memorable spot.

"No, I was too anxious to see my child," replied Mr. Walton ; "but we will call now, and inquire after our gallant young friend."

Linda's heart beat quick when, through an opening in the trees, she caught a glimpse of the well-known mansion ; but the hospitable door was shut, the windows closed, and the grass grew rank about the threshold.

"Oh, father," cried Linda, pale with disappointment and apprehension, "there's nobody here ! What has become of them ?"

"They have probably removed," replied her father. "Mrs. Lee told me she thought of doing so. I am very sorry, for I really loved that boy, and his mother was a lady in every sense of the word. Let us walk round the lot, and see if we can find any one, who can give us information of them."

Linda eagerly sprang from the carriage, and sought the

paths now partly overgrown with weeds, which she and Roland had together traced. She looked for the mocking-birds' nest; but the vines coiled like huge serpents over the hollow where their young tendrils once made a fairy bower. Linda gazed sadly on the changes time and neglect had wrought, when her eye suddenly lighted up. What was it she saw on the gray, mossy stone, leaning like a broken pillar against the tree? Her own name, rudely but distinctly carved. Her first sensation was delight that Roland had not forgotten her; but that old, mossy tablet looked so much like a tombstone in the midst of the silence and loneliness that she could not bear to linger near it. She saw the waters of the creek where Roland had launched his bark canoe, gleaming in the sunshine, and she persuaded her father to let her ramble to its banks, while he remained near the deserted cottage. She found the bark canoe moored in a little cove, formed by the shade of the silver-trunked beech. Again Linda's eye sparkled, for strangely eloquent, in that still spot, her own name spoke again and again from the smooth, white bark. Even on the darkened birch of the canoe she could read the same characters. The solitude seemed vocal with the name of Linda. But where was the hand that had traced those rustic letters—where the arm broken for their deliverance? Linda turned away with a sigh, and for many a mile she rode in silence at her father's side.

"Oh, how natural every thing looks!" exclaimed Linda when, at her journey's close, she beheld her own home after an absence of two years; her first absence, and how long it seemed in the retrospect! "Can this be Robert?" thought she, as a tall and very handsome youth eagerly approached the carriage-door to assist her in alighting. The question was answered by the young man's catching her in his arms, and giving a welcome so cordial that her cheeks were covered with blushes.

"Why, Linda, how pretty, how very pretty you are!" exclaimed Robert, fixing his bold, black eyes, sparkling with unaffected admiration, on his youthful step-sister. "*Oh, puella carissima!*" as Aristides would most feelingly remark, you are more than welcome to old Pinegrove."

"And what a tall gentleman and expert flatterer Master Robert is become!" answered Linda, smilingly. "But, pray, tell me if you have heard any thing of our dear, good, nonpareil of a schoolmaster?"

"Yes, I met a gentleman at the university, just returned from Cuba, who knew our sapient teacher very well. His health was amending, and he was quoting Latin more furiously than ever. Honour to Aristides wherever he may be. If he had not whipped a little of the offending Adam out of me, I should have grown up the veriest bear in the universe. Ah, Linda, did you not think me a horrible young monster when I first came among you?"

Linda had now reached the threshold, which was still guarded by the faithful Bruno. Chained to his old block, he lay shaggy and massy, and apparently half asleep; but there was a bright look of recognition in his intelligent eyes, and a quivering motion of his huge paws, when Linda came near him. "Ah, Bruno, you have not forgotten me," cried his young mistress, joyfully patting his broad head. "You remember the biscuits I tossed into that large mouth." She checked herself, fearing she was betraying the secret of her night-ramble; but she had so often fed Bruno that no one knew to what she referred.

Linda thought the eyebrows of Mrs. Walton looked whiter and more highly arched than ever; that her lips looked more pinched and cold, for she compared her to the loved image of Mrs. Reveire, treasured in her heart, and there were but few who would not suffer by the comparison. She evidently tried to be gracious, and Linda was grateful for the effort, and gave

her real heart-smiles in return for the little, pale gleams of kindness that lighted up her stony eyes. The negroes gave her a rapturous welcome. Aunt Judy had been allowed to come over and be present at the first greeting. When Linda, half-wild with excitement, was running about the yard, looking for the ducks, chickens, and geese, Judy took her aside, for her heart was brimming over, and was really aching from its fulness. She caught the hands of her pet-child, first one and then the other, and pressed her African lips upon their snow; then leaning her tall, white turban against the garden railing, sobbed aloud :

“Oh, Lord a mercy! bless her and presarve her for ever and ever! And did the blessed child think so much of poor, good-for-nothing old nigger as to go all living alone through the woods, when all dark as pitch, to get good massa to buy and take care of poor Judy? Lord, bless her! I never knew 'bout it when she went away, or I'd crawled on my hands and knees arter to kiss the dust of her feet; and now she came back so pretty and so good. Oh! if poor, dear missus was but live to see it!”

“Pray, Aunt Judy,” cried Linda, smiling through the tears the affectionate and grateful creature had brought to her eyes; “pray, don't eat my hands up; and, pray, don't make me cry and look ugly, when I've just got home and everybody is staring at me so hard.”

“Young missus look puty any way—no matter if she cry her eye out her head, she look sweet; the Lord bless her little soul!”

“Mr. Marshall has turned traitor, I see,” said Linda, “an broken his promise; but say no more about it, Aunt Judy—it is not worth the thanking. Instead of being as dark as pitch, it was as bright as day, and the fairies were hopping among the pine trees, keeping me company the whole way. Then I had such a nice ride home with Mr. Marshall. You

don't know how grand I felt. He is a kind master, is he not, Judy?"

"Oh, yes, missy, the best massa ever was. But, when young missy get married, Judy come and live with her all her born days."

"That will be a long time to come," said the young girl; and Robert came to lead her into the house.

"I know what Massa Robert got in his head," muttered the negro, following them with her eyes and shaking her head significantly. "I know what new, old missus got in her head too,—nigger see a heap they an't thinking of. But the Lord never meant them two come together. Millennium time an't here yet, and lions and lambs don't get in the same pen. Massa Robert sure enough! 'Fore he my massa, I see him cat alive fust!"

When Linda retired for the night, and Nelly ushered her into one of the *company* rooms, always kept so carefully swept and garnished, she said laughingly to her attendant, "You have mistaken the room, Nelly. I don't see the old rafters, and cobwebs, and little, red pine-table. You must think I am company."

"And so she be," said Nelly, grinning; "you no sleep in that old hole any more. Missus got it full of dried fruit and cotton, and a heap o' things besides. It no fit for you any how, and she ought to be 'shamed of hisself to put you there."

"Has she put Robert in my little room again?" asked Linda.

"No, he too big for that this time. He mad as fire, when he think on't, I 'spect now."

Linda was far happier at home than she expected to be. Her step-mother was mysteriously polite, and Robert more than kind. They enjoyed together all the amusements a country residence afforded. Every day he accompanied her

on horseback, through the woods, whose pure, resinous odours she delighted to inhale. Robert was a noble, fearless rider, and as he dashed along on his spirited steed, his long, black locks flying back from his brow, Linda could not help admiring his equestrian graces, though she wished he would be more gentle to the horses, and not show such superfluous fierceness of manner in disciplining them. She wished, too, he would not praise her so much, and tell her how pretty she was, and what a beautiful woman she was going to be. She thought it very silly in him,—her own step-brother.

One day, as they were riding slowly along over a sandy path, Robert turned to her very abruptly,—

“What’s the reason, Linda, you never told me about that farmer boy, who stopped your carriage on the way to perdition?”

“What more have I to tell, but that he saved our lives at a fearful risk to himself!” said Linda, blushing.

“Well, I don’t see any thing in the question to make you blush,” said Robert, pettishly. “Wasn’t he a great, coarse, vulgar-looking boy,—dressed in homespun and red brogans?”

“No, indeed,” answered Linda, angry at the sneering manner of Robert. “There was nothing coarse or vulgar about him. It was easy enough to see he was a gentleman’s son. His dress might have been of domestic manufacture, but it did not disgrace him, or prevent him from looking handsome.”

“You seem to admire the young gentleman exceedingly.”

“One would think you thought my life of little value, to hear the scornful way in which you speak of my deliverer.”

“It is because I value it so much, Linda, that I cannot bear to think it was rescued by that plebeian boy.”

Linda’s spirit was roused—an expression of unutterable disdain curled the young roses of her lips.

"That plebeian boy," she cried, "as you are pleased to call him, Robert, is one of Nature's noblemen. He is your equal in every thing but fortune; and far more than equal, for he does not depend upon such poor things as money and birth to lift him up in the world. I tell you he is a gentleman, and I shall despise any one who contradicts me after this. There," she added, laughing and looking back, as she urged her horse into a canter,—“haven't I made a fine speech?"

Robert bit his lip with vexation, but he had never admired Linda so much before. Jealousy began to mingle with his dawning passion, and the more difficult the object appeared of attainment, the more precious it seemed in his estimation. As he rode along, silent and gloomy, Linda felt sorry that she had spoken with so much warmth.

"Let us shake hands, brother Robert, and not quarrel any more. It is not likely I shall ever see Roland Lee again, but I must ever think of him with gratitude and respect."

"I wish you would not call me brother," said Robert. "I am no more brother of yours than this famous Roland is."

"Really you are very strange, Mr. Robert Graham. Is that respectful enough to suit your majesty?"

"I don't want you to be respectful. I want you to be more affectionate, more familiar than ever; but, for heaven's sake, stop calling me brother."

Linda looked with astonishment—almost fear—upon Robert. His manners were so strange, his colour so high, and his voice so excited. Surely he could not be intoxicated. Yet, what could be the cause of his singular behaviour?

"Linda," said he, seizing her bridle with one hand, so as to check the rapid motion of her horse; "you and I are getting old enough to understand each other. I am nineteen, and you are fourteen, are you not?"

"Yes,—but what of that?"

"Why. in two years I shall be twenty-one, and you will be

sixteen. I shall have left college and you Rose Bower; and then we shall both be thinking of getting married."

Linda, who dreamed not of the application of his words, laughed till the green woods rang.

"Married! I hope you don't think I'm such a silly little girl as to have such ridiculous ideas in my head. Mrs. Reveire taught me something better than that. Why! I am nothing but a child, and haven't left off my bib aprons yet."

"You are not such a child but what you can understand what I mean, if you choose," cried Robert, colouring still deeper, for he knew he was taking a bold step, though often prompted by his mother. "I mean that in two years you will be old enough to marry, and I want you to promise to marry me. That is the reason I don't want you to call me brother any more."

"Robert, for mercy's sake, don't talk in that way," cried Linda, terrified by this astounding declaration, though she could not, would not, believe him in earnest. "I won't let you speak so to me. It is wicked."

"Where is the wickedness?" cried he, vehemently, growing bolder now the revelation was made. "Why haven't I a right to love you as well as anybody else? I don't want you to marry me now, for we are both too young; but in two years from this time, I declare to you, Linda Walton, by the heaven above and the earth beneath, that you shall be the wife of Robert Graham."

"Let go my bridle, sir," cried Linda, frightened, indignant, and bewildered at this strange scene. "I'll tell my father, and you will not dare to talk to me in that way any more."

"Your father and my mother know it already. That is, they are anxious that we should be married in a few years. And as I shall not see you for a long time after this, I was determined I would not let you go without telling you now

much I loved you, for I do love you, Linda, better than any brother could love, for all I used to treat you so shamefully."

Her father wished it—Mrs. Walton too! Linda felt as if in the coils of a serpent, whose folds must tighten round her. If Mrs. Walton willed it, her doom was sealed. Too young, too innocent, too child-like to think of marriage with any one—the idea of it, associated with Robert, filled her with horror. She was beginning to like him as a brother; now she could not help hating him. She could not bear to be with him alone in the woods. She made her horse go faster, till at last she urged it into a furious gallop.

"Linda, Linda, you will be thrown off, if you ride so furiously," exclaimed Robert, again trying to catch hold of the bridle. But Linda flew on, without looking on the right, or on the left. She wanted to be at home, in her own room, far away from Robert's terrible black eyes.

"What a race you two are running," said Mr. Walton, as they came galloping into the yard, and the animals, flecked with foam, stood panting and quivering under the trees. "This is not safe, Robert; you must take better care of Linda than this."

"I tried to restrain her, but she would not let me," replied Robert, stooping down, as if to examine the girth.

"Take me down, quick, father; I am very dizzy," cried Linda, impatiently; but before her father could reach her, she tossed the reins and sprang from the saddle; then running up stairs, closed the door, threw herself on the bed, and burst into a passionate fit of weeping. All her happiness was fled; her holiday enjoyments at an end; the sweet confidence of childhood gone for ever. She knew something of the spirits with which she had to deal. The imbecility of her father, the despotism of Mrs. Walton, the bold reckless determination of Robert: she knew them all. Every feeling in her heart rose in rebellion against the idea of such a union. It seemed

more than unnatural—sacrilegious in her eyes. She had been so long accustomed to look upon Robert in the relation of a brother, she shrunk as much from any other tie as if she were really bound to him by the ties of consanguinity.

Oh! that Mrs. Reveire were near, that she might fly to her for sympathy and counsel. Oh! that she had never left the guardian shades of Rose Bower.

Linda refused to go to the supper-table, on the plea of a violent headache, no false excuse in her case, for her temples throbbed and burned as violently as poor Luta's did, when the fever began to rage in her veins.

"Won't you have a cup of tea, Linda?" asked Mrs. Walton's soft, hissing voice. Linda started. She had not heard the opening of the door. How had the serpent glided in?

"Well, I will not force you," said Mrs. Walton, placing the cup on the table, and taking a seat by the bed. Linda plunged her head between two pillows, so as to shut out sight and sound, but in vain. That thin, peculiar voice could insinuate itself through any barrier.

"Robert tells me he has frightened you," said the voice. "I thought you had more sense than to behave so like a mere child. I should think you would be proud and glad to think you were going to have such a handsome, smart, and rich husband as Robert. I am sure any lady in the land might jump at such a chance."

"I don't want Robert for a husband," sobbed Linda. "I don't want anybody for a husband. Mrs. Reveire always said we mustn't think of the boys while we were at school and I have two years to go yet."

"Linda, you are not the simpleton you are pretending to be," cried Mrs. Walton, pulling the pillows from her face. "It is proper you should know our plans, and you have reason to feel honoured and happy in the prospect of this projected union."

"But what is the reason you are in such a hurry?" cried Linda, with sudden animation. "Why can't I wait till I am old enough to choose for myself? What good will it do you or father for me to marry Robert? Tell me, for I want to know."

"Robert is rich, and you have a large fortune. We wish to unite them. An all-sufficient reason, and one which you will find shall outweigh every other."

"Fortune!" repeated Linda, her eyes flashing scornfully through her tears. "Let him take my fortune, if that is what you want. I wish I were the poorest girl in the south-west, if I must be bought and sold like a negro slave. But I never will be. I never will enter into your mercenary scheme."

"Miss Linda Walton," said Mrs. Walton, the white heat beginning to gleam from her eyes, "you are not to address me in that manner. You had better submit at once, or you will find to your cost, what it is to resist my authority, or oppose my will."

"I will resist it at any cost," cried Linda, springing from the bed, and looking wildly around her. "Where is my father? Let me go to my father!" continued she, more vehemently, as Mrs. Walton placed her back against the door, and fixed upon her a glance, before which a weaker spirit would have quailed in terror.

"What good will it do you to go to your father?" exclaimed the inflexible step-mother. "Has he ever dared to countermand my decrees? Have you ever seen him do it? Have you ever seen any one do it? No! nor you never will."

"I dare to do it," cried the child, with an undaunted air, "and I will do it. I have submitted to your tyranny long enough, you pitiless woman. I've felt the marks of your lash on my shoulders. I slept for years in a room you scarcely thought good enough for a slave. You sent away from me

my faithful old nurse. You ruled me with a rod of iron, and I did not complain. But I will bear no more. I will not be trafficked away in this vile manner. If my father does not protect me, I will appeal to the laws, and they shall."

Mrs. Walton started. Was this the sobbing, terrified child she had found buried in pillows, and shrinking from her sight? She looked taller, older, standing so resolute and fearless before her. The step-mother did not waver in her purpose, but she began to think she might push matters too far. She had no conception that Linda had such a spirit in her bosom yet, after having been under her discipline so long.

"I do not wish my house to be made a scene of uproar and confusion," she added. "Let nothing more be said about it at present. It will be time enough to make a fuss about it two years hence. Remember, there is to be silence on this subject now. For the peace of the household, I am even willing to overlook your rebellious, undutiful, and ungrateful behaviour."

"Ungrateful!" repeated Linda. "Tell me what gratitude I owe you. What motherly tenderness have you ever bestowed upon me? I wanted to love you, and you would not let me do it. You would not let my father love me. You tried to keep everybody from loving me. You made me want to lie down in my mother's grave and die. Am I to be grateful for all this?"

"I know what gratitude to expect from step-daughters," answered Mrs. Walton, with livid lips. "I found you a passionate, spoiled, and self-willed child, and I taught you the manners of a lady. I took you away from the negroes, and made you sit by my own side; and now, because I want to give you my own son, a son of whom any mother in the universe might be proud, you look as if you would trample me under your feet, and address me as you would not dare to do

a single slave on the plantation." Mrs. Walton glided through the door, which she closed as softly as if they had been talking about roses.

"Yes," thought Linda, with sudden revulsion of feeling, and sinking into a chair; "I was a passionate and wayward child. I did not deserve to be loved. If I had not been tyrannized over, I should have been a tyrant myself. I have reason to be grateful to her, since she saved me from myself. And even now, what violent passions have I displayed! What bitter reproaches have I heaped upon her! I should not have forgotten that she is my father's wife! Oh! Mrs. Reveire, how would your clear, serene eye have rebuked your pupil, had you beheld her a few moments ago."

Thus Linda communed with her own heart, and became wise. While freely condemning herself, she became lenient in her judgment of others. It was very true what Mrs. Walton had said, that it would be time enough to make a resistance two years hence. She had promised her that nothing more should be said upon the subject at present, and she would endeavour to banish it from her remembrance. And Robert, too; how harshly she had treated him, for daring to tell her that he loved her better than a brother. She would not have used such threatening language, had she been calm and gentle as she ought to have been.

The next morning (every one knows the reviving influence of a morning sunshine) Linda came down with pale cheeks and a dark shade under her eyes, but with a quiet, gentle air, and endeavoured to appear as if nothing had occurred the previous evening. She could not help blushing painfully when she met Robert's eye, and it was not strange, for

"As the bolt bursts on high
From the black cloud that bounds it,
Flashed the soul of that eye
Through the long lashes round it."

Its hue was the blackness of darkness, and its expression powerful.

It is not to be supposed that the extreme agitation of his daughter had been unnoticed by Mr. Walton, or that its cause was unknown. He imputed it, however, more to surprise than repugnance; and, when his wife told him that it was best to say nothing to Linda on the subject at present, he yielded, with his usual pliability, to her stronger will. When Mrs. Walton first expressed her determination that Robert and Linda should be united at an early age, he was startled by the unexpectedness of the suggestion; but, when she explained the worldly policy of the scheme, he acknowledged its wisdom. Robert was no longer a rude, boisterous boy, but a handsome and talented youth, and whatever moral defects he might have, time would correct. Ah! time does wondrous things. It reconciles the beast to the burden—the ox to the yoke—even the lordly lion to the bars of his cage. It had reconciled Mr. Walton to his domestic bondage. Years of vassalage had blunted his finer sensibilities and deadened his nicer perceptions. It is true, in the cottage of Mrs. Lee he had displayed extreme delicacy in putting his gift in the leaves of the family Bible; but his wife was not present. When removed from the atmosphere of home, some sparks of native manliness would flash forth; but they were becoming fainter and fainter—fewer and farther between.

Robert's vacation terminated sooner than Linda's, and it now drew to a close. Notwithstanding her endeavours to treat him as she had always done, there had been coldness and constraint between them. Robert had usually passed his days in hunting, and his evenings in reading or sullen silence. He either resented the strong repugnance she had manifested, or was acting under an influence stronger than his own passions. It was the last evening of his stay. Linda sat on the steps of the piazza. Robert came and stood by the pillar

against which she leaned. The stars had come out one by one, till they made as glorious a company as when they sang together in the morning of creation, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; and just in the vista, formed by the dividing branches of two lofty trees, the young moon was seen hanging her silver crescent on the dark-blue sky.

"Wish, Robert," said Linda; "the moon is shining over your right shoulder. Wish for a safe and pleasant journey."

"I'd wish for something better than that, or not at all."

"Then I will wish for you," cried Linda, with a touch of her former playfulness. "Oh, kind young moon, watch over the traveller, and guard him from all wild beasts, runaway negroes, and runaway horses likewise."

"I did not think you wished me so much good, Linda," replied Robert, with animation. "Come, let us go where those two trees seem trying to catch the moon between them. It will be a long time before we walk together again."

He took her hand and led her down the steps. She did not like to walk alone with Robert; neither did she like to make him angry, when he was to leave her so soon. Perhaps he might die during the two coming years, and for ever doleful to her heart would be the remembrance of unkindness exhibited in the parting hour. "No," thought she, while her hand trembled in the grasp of his; "let him say what he will, I will be gentle in return, for who knows what will happen before we meet again?"

"I don't wonder you are afraid of me, Linda," said Robert, abruptly. "When I think what a rough, greedy, selfish, young monster I used to be, I am ashamed to look you in the face. You remember the whipping the sapient Aristides gave me? I know you do; and do you recollect the pitying shower of tears you shed over my disgrace? I don't know which had the greatest effect upon me, the lashes or the tears. Justice was administering the punishment, and pity was dropping

balm into the wounds. I thought you from that moment a little angel. I had abused and tormented you so shamefully, you ought to have laughed at my smarting back."

"Oh, Robert, how could you think me so vindictive?"

"I did not think you so; but you should have hated me. Well, I resolved to be a man instead of a brute. I found out that I had a mind and a heart buried in a mass of inert matter. It was a great discovery. Since then, I think I have changed as much in the inner as the outer man." And Robert passed his hand over his long, black locks, shading them back from his forehead.

"Robert thinks himself very handsome," said Linda to herself, "and so he is."

"Well, no matter," continued he, "about the past. The future—let us speak of that. I am determined to study as never youth studied before. I will be first or nothing. I will climb to the topmost round of the ladder, and then drag it up after me, so that none can follow my footsteps."

"How selfish!" Linda could not help exclaiming.

"What if I am selfish?" cried he, impetuously. "Everybody is selfish, only they have a different way of showing it. All this I am resolved to do, and then I shall come back, covered with honours, to claim you, Linda, as my own. But, if you treat me then as you did the other day in the woods, I swear, I'll plunge as low in vice as I have raised myself high in knowledge and reputation."

"Robert, for heaven's sake, don't begin to talk in that way!" cried Linda, in a faltering voice.

"I don't want to frighten you, but I must speak out. I promised my mother to keep silence, but I cannot do it longer. You can have no conception how I love you, Linda. I don't care for your fortune. I should love you if you were the overseer's daughter as well as I do now. Promise me that you will think of no one else, love no one else, till we meet

again, and I know you will keep your word. I will not go away without this promise. You must give it."

"Do not speak so fiercely, Robert," cried Linda, trying to draw her hand away from his tightening grasp. "There is no need of it. I am very willing to promise to love no one else, for I am too young to think of such a thing. Mrs. Reveire, my schoolmates, and books are all I shall have to love. No naughty boys are admitted into Rose Bower."

"Don't laugh, Linda—I can't bear to hear you laugh when I'm so terribly in earnest. I have your promise though, and, when I go to my chamber, I mean to open one of my veins and write it down in blood."

Poor Linda!—it was a dark fate that linked her childhood to this youth of strong, precocious passions and headstrong will. It was a touching sight to see her, in all her childlike simplicity, innocence, and purity, shrinking by the side of the tall, fiery young man whose eyes flashed like meteors under the glimmering stars and the young, pearly moon. Well might she tremble for the future, thus early brought into the stormy conflict of human passions. Well might she weep, for who was to save her from the destiny that hung so threatening over her? Why did the memory of Roland Lee give her such exquisite pain? Brave and generous as he was, his arm would be stretched in vain to rescue her from the foes of her own household.

Thus Robert and Linda parted.

Once more in her beloved Rose Bower, she looked upon the past as a feverish dream, and the future again brightened with hope. Two years glided by, and the dreaded hour of her departure arrived, bringing with it the dark host of terrors she had so long kept at bay. She was to enjoy, however, a short respite. Her friend, Emily Chestney, now the happy wife of Edmund Carleton, and a resident of Mobile, had written a pressing invitation to her to make her a visit as soon as her school-

days were expired. Her father consented the more readily, as he had business of his own to transact in that city. It is unnecessary to describe the sorrow which filled the warm, grateful, and affectionate heart of Linda in parting with Mrs. Reveire and her young companions.

"If you should be in distress, or driven to extremity," said Mrs. Reveire, to whom Linda had confided all her anxieties, "remember you have a friend whose arms will be ever open to shelter you, whose home to receive you. But remember, above all things, my beloved child, that you have a Friend in heaven, kinder and more powerful than any earthly one, to whom you must look in the hour of trial and dread."

Hallowed by the associations of her happiest childhood and blooming girlhood—endeared by the memory of ten thousand acts of kindness and affection—ennobled as the scene of her mind's growth and her heart's expansion—Rose Bower was the spot to which, in after years, her thoughts turned, like pious pilgrims, to some holy shrine.

CHAPTER X.

BEAUTIFUL is the winding Alabama, with its clear, flowing waters and luxuriant shores! And beautiful did the *Belle Creole* look, as she glided over the foaming current with the speed of an eagle and the grace of a swan!

It was about sunset, and a long line of golden sheen marked the wake of the vessel, now sweeping round a graceful bend, where the river rolled deep and strong, unobstructed by sandbars or rocks, and the young pilot of the *Belle Creole* rested against his wheel for a moment to take in the beauty of a scene on which he gazed with ever-renewed delight. How beautiful were those high, white bluffs, embroidered with rich, green moss-work; while here and there a silver spring, gushing forth, sparkled and rippled and tinkled like sweet-sounding bells, or dripping slowly over a smoother surface, whispered of coolness and freshness to the passer-by. What rich, mingling shades of verdure crowned those hoary cliffs! The holly, with its deep, perennial green; the magnolia, with its broad, magnificent, shining leaves; the tall, stately pines, those warriors of the woods, with their dark, unbending tuft-knots; and, ever and anon, the long, gray moss sweeping its funeral garlands over the living green—all seemed hurrying along with spirit-like velocity to the music of the dashing waves. Sometimes, high up on the shelving bank, a large warehouse, with its long, wooden slide reaching down to the river's edge, a thoroughfare for the massy cotton bales, interrupted the monotony of the scene. Again rich fields of cultivated lands, adorned with the milk-white cotton balls, rolled like sea-green waves, spotted with foam, far as the eye could reach.

Accustomed, as the young pilot was, to this prodigal display of Nature's loveliness, he still gazed with enthusiastic admiration ; but another feature soon arrested his attention, and it had no power to wander more.

A gentleman, no longer young, and yet not old, with a very young girl hanging on his arm, walked with slow steps the hurricane deck. The extreme simplicity and youthfulness of the young girl's attire, marked her as one just "let loose from school." A white muslin sun-bonnet was swinging from her arm, a full, white frock, short enough to show the neat, white, embroidered pantalette, and a short, black silk apron, completed her dress. She was talking very earnestly to the gentleman, whose head was bent towards her, and her head was slightly raised. Why did the pilot start, and the blood rush so quick and warm to his sunburnt cheek ? Ah ! was not that the same sweet vision which had once beamed on his boyish fancy, and shone a star of memory on his lonely night-watches ? Those soft, bright, deep-brown eyes, were they not the same which met his waking glance when he swooned from the pain of his shattered arm ? That complexion of pearly fairness, brightened with the roses of youth—those dark-brown ringlets, so carelessly yet gracefully arranged—he knew, he recollected them all. The figure was taller, rounder, and more womanly ; but the face was scarcely changed. The heavenly innocence of childhood still rested there. But hark ! what does she say ? for the wind bears her voice to your ear as she passes along, unconscious of the vicinity of one whom her grateful heart has never forgotten. She is not accustomed to the structure and machinery of a steamboat, or her eyes would have sought the pilot's house for the sake of Roland Lee. The green railings which enclose him are above her head, and her soul is occupied intensely with the theme her father has chosen to converse upon.

"Do not speak of it, father—do not think of it—I never

can consent. The more I think of it, the more I shrink from the thought. Tell me not that he is handsome—that he has brilliant talents—I know it all. But you do not speak of his fierce passions—his fiery temper. Oh ! father, they would make me wretched.”

“ You would mould him at your will.”

“ I don’t want to mould others to *my* will,” was the firm yet modest reply. “ If I ever do marry, it shall be to one who can guide and sustain me in my life’s journey, one whom I can respect as well as love—reverence as well as adore. But, father,” added she, blushing at her own enthusiasm, “ I don’t want to marry for years to come. I want to revel awhile in the joy of freedom ; I want to travel to see the world—to play the belle a little ; and, more than all, I want to see if I can’t make my father’s home a little happier.”

“ A pretty home I shall have, if you refuse to marry Robert,” uttered Mr. Walton, in a fretful, desponding tone. “ Nothing but storms and tempests about my ears the whole time. There is no use in talking about it, Linda ; you must obey, for Mrs. Walton will be obeyed. She will not change her resolution ; and, as for your foolish romance about not loving him, when you have lived as long as I have, you will know what nonsense that is.”

“ Then rather let me die this moment,” exclaimed Linda, casting her eyes down on the golden wake streaming behind them ; “ rather let me find a grave in those waters than live to mourn over my young life’s vanished dream.”

“ That is the way all young girls talk,” said Mr. Walton, on whom two more years of intercourse with his eligible mate had passed with hardening process ; “ but it is nothing but talk. I see the propriety of hastening the match, as you might be running away with some romantic fellow—some poor fortune-hunter—who would bring you to poverty and disgrace.”

"Father, I shall never marry without *your* consent; neither will I without my *own*. I know the limits of a parent's authority and a daughter's obedience."

Linda spoke this with the air of a young princess. Her father did not reply; but cast upon her a troubled and wavering glance.

"I'm sure I wish your happiness, my daughter; you must know that I do."

"You have always been kind," she replied, in a softened voice, tears gathering into her eyes; "you have always loved me when away from that woman, whom I never could call mother. Oh! that I could see my own dear father once more presiding with dignity over his own household; that he would dare to be, in thought and deed, a man."

"Father, I am very young, and I have no right to read lessons to you; but you have not been yourself for many years. You have sacrificed your own happiness. I know, I feel you have; but, as you expect to meet the soul of my mother, at the bar of God, on the great judgment-day, do not destroy that of her child."

She paused, hung her head on her father's shoulder, and wept. His dried affections bloomed afresh, under the influence of that gentle heart-shower. He clasped her in his arms, kissed her fondly again and again, promised she should not be forced, if he could help it, (a very necessary reservation,) bade her dry her eyes, lest the passengers should suspect he had been scolding her, and led her tenderly from the deck.

And how felt the young pilot, while listening to this thrilling conversation? How could he remain still and silent, when every word made his heart bound, and his blood burn in his veins? At the first glance of recognition, he had bowed his head and knelt by the side of the wheel, so that the lineaments of his figure could not be discerned. The boat

was gliding along a smooth current, and it needed not his guiding hand. At first he blushed at the thought of being a listener, but soon the intensity of his interest absorbed every other emotion. How he admired the noble, independent, yet womanly spirit of the daughter! How he scorned, yet pitied the pusillanimous mind of the father! How roused were his passions by the idea of the handsome, brilliant, fierce and fiery Robert!

Romantic fellow, and low fortune-hunter! These expressions grated harshly on his ear. He might be the *first*—but the *last* never. He felt the distance that separated him from the rich heiress, and his proud heart recoiled from the thought of ever presuming on the condescension shown him when a boy.

“She spoke kindly—she sympathized with my boyish enthusiasm,” repeated he to himself; “but she was a child then, and we were alone on the hills. And now, what is she? A proud, beautiful, high-spirited heiress—and I—a proud, poor, high-spirited young man. Ah! there is a great gulf between the rich and poor! but I leaped it once, in my boyhood; and should danger again threaten, I’d vault over the abyss, at the peril of a thousand lives, to stand one moment by her side, on common ground. This bold step-brother! she resists him now, but will she always stem the current setting so strongly against her?”

Thus wildly ran the thoughts of the young pilot, as, with unerring eye and skilful hand, he directed the graceful motions of the Belle Creole.

Linda, who had always associated the idea of Roland with rivers and boats, could not help indulging the hope of meeting him on the element he loved. She wanted to inquire if there was one who bore his name on board, but an unaccountable diffidence prevented her. “If he were here,” thought she “he would see our name on the register, and if he has

forgotten us, I would not wish to intrude myself on his remembrance."

The rich, golden clouds that lingered round the setting sun gradually lost their glory, and, assuming that form so expressively called *thunder-pillars*, leaned gloomily over the river. The moon, rising above their darkened summits, looked down on her celestial face mirrored in the water; and as the clouds gathered round her, darting the lightning from their bosoms, the more heavenly became her smile, the brighter her radiance.

Linda, delighting in the sublime as well as the beautiful, went out on deck, and stood gazing on the scene in a transport of youthful enthusiasm. She heard the thunder muttering in the distance, and she was glad—it seemed such fitting music for the gallant boat to march by on its foaming way. She stood, with the breeze rustling through her ringlets and cooling her brow, wondering how the ladies could be so stupid as to think of sleep, instead of coming abroad, like her, to feel themselves a part of nature's wonderousness. She wanted some one near, to whom she could exclaim—"How beautiful—how grand!" whose eye would follow hers, as it watched the lightning's path or the moonbeam's track, whose ear would listen with hers to "the thunder-drum of heaven," and the dashing music of the waters. She heard a step walking to and fro in the gentleman's cabin, which she recognised as her father's. "I have not bidden him good-night," said she. "I will go and bring him here, and make him admire, whether he will or no."

Mr. Walton heard the soft, low voice that called him from the door, and obeyed the summons. The interview he had had with his daughter had roused his best, kindest feelings; and though he was beginning to feel rather sleepy, he lingered some time by her side, listening to her animated expressions of admiration and delight.

"Do you think there is any danger of the boiler's bursting?" asked she, as the steam rushed violently from its pent-house.

"No, no, child—what makes you think of such a thing?"

"I have heard that electricity has caused such accidents; and I have been told, too, there is a large quantity of powder on board."

"That may be; but there is no cause for apprehension. This is a fine new boat, and the captain never sleeps when there is the least shadow of danger. You had better retire now, for you may take cold from too long exposure to this breeze."

"Well, good-night, father;" and passing her arm closely round his neck, she whispered, "Forgive me, if I have said any thing to wound your feelings to-night. Indeed, I did not mean it."

"Bless thee, darling," answered he, pressing her in his arms, in a long, affectionate embrace; "I have more need to ask forgiveness of thee."

Surely, some pitying angel had directed Linda's heart to seek this last touching manifestation of a father's love.

Without changing her apparel or extinguishing her lamp, she lay down in her state-room; for, notwithstanding her father's assertion, she could not dismiss all her misgivings, and resolved, if any accident did occur, it should find her prepared. Too much excited to sleep, she lay and listened to the deep, sullen, monotonous, plunging sound of the engine, falling so regularly and heavily on the ear. And when the mighty steam spirit, imprisoned in those iron tubes, sent out its strong breath in startling sighs, as if labouring for deliverance, she could not help trembling at the thought of the terrific power man had made subservient to his will, well knowing if the giant vassal once gained the mastery, ruin and death would ensue. Gradually, however, slumber settled on her eyelids,

and she wandered in the fairy land of dreams; while the storm, which had been gathering, exhausted itself in rain, and the wind rocked the boat like a cradle, inducing deeper sleep.

But hark!—What sudden, deafening, rending thunder-peal bursts on the ear? Springing from her couch, Linda gazed wildly round her. Hark! again!—What shrieks of agony, what wails of despair; what hoarse, desperate cries mingle in dreadful chorus! The floor quakes and reels and heaves! A hot, suffocating, intolerable vapour fills the air.

“God of mercy,” she cried—“we are lost. Oh, my father—come to me—save me.”

With a piercing shriek, she was rushing to the cabin door, but the shelving boards seemed to give way under her feet. She staggered and would have fallen, but a strong arm was thrown suddenly round her, and she was borne irresistibly to the very edge of the boat, whose shattered railing lay in splinters in their path.

“Oh! whither are you bearing me?” she cried, struggling and recoiling from the fearful brink. “Let me go and perish with my father. Let me go,” she shrieked again. “I will not leave him here to die.”

“You cannot save him,” uttered a deep voice in her ear. “You will destroy yourself. The boiler is burst. The boat is lost. Fear not—struggle not—I will preserve you, or perish with you. Haste, or another explosion still more terrible will shiver us to atoms.”

Even in that moment of indescribable horror, Linda recognised the tones of a voice which once before had breathed of deliverance, and death seemed robbed of half its terrors. With one wild glance at the dark waters rolling below, rolling in inky blackness, in contrast with the lurid glare of the flames bursting above—one supplicating look to heaven, and yielding to the motion of the arm that held her with a still tightening grasp, she felt herself rushing downward with diz-

zying velocity, then plunging into the cold waves, where many a scorched and blackened corpse was already floating. She did not lose all consciousness, though, without any volition of her own, she was borne above the stream. Her head sunk powerless on the shoulder of her preserver, whose voice still murmured in her ear, "Fear not—I will save you. Fear not—trust in me." Wails, shrieks, and groans were behind her, the mournful gurgling of the waters all round her, darkness and death before her, yet that low voice, whispering of safety and trust, sustained her sinking soul. They have reached the bank, a steep, shelving spot, where the gnarled roots and tangled boughs prevented a higher ascent. The water still splashed round her knees, but her feet pressed the earth. She had escaped the terrors of the drowning—*she* had escaped—but her father—where was he? "Father, father!" she cried, stretching out her arms towards the boat, to whose smoking timbers human forms were clinging and writhing in the throes of mortal agony. At that moment, a disfigured and blackened face—a pair of quivering arms, rose above the surface of the river, then sunk again with a sullen plunge. Then came another tremendous explosion, louder than the loudest thunder, and the Belle Creole was wrapped, from prow to helm, in one sheet of rolling flame. But Linda heard not the thundering peal—she saw not the sheeted flames. Those withering features, those shivering arms, rising above the water at her agonized appeal, changed and distorted as they were, she recognised them as her father's. With a deep groan, she fell back in the arms of her deliverer, and death seemed stamped on her motionless form.

Roland looked round him in despair. Must she die under these accumulating horrors, after escaping a burning and a drowning death? Those who were saved in the yawl had reached the opposite shore, and he appeared alone in the midst of desolation. White and still as marble, she looked in the mag-

nificent blaze of that awful conflagration. The moon rose, too, above the sinking clouds, and, through the wreathing smoke, mingled its pale splendours with the crimson glare, and cast an unearthly reflection on her pallid features.

"Oh, my God," ejaculated the young man, kneeling on one knee, his nerveless arms scarcely able to sustain her. "Thou who hast protected thus far, leave her not to perish."

Frantic at her protracted insensibility, he chafed her icy hands in his, laid his cheek to *her* cold cheeks, and pressed his lips, warm with the breath of life, to *her* chill and motionless ones.

"Linda, Linda," he cried, and though no answer came, he still continued his passionate adjuration, while scalding tears gushed from his eyes, and mingled with the cold drops that oozed from her dripping hair. At length a shudder passed through her frame—she opened her eyes, with a look of wild alarm, but as they rested long and earnestly on the face bending over her, they softened into an expression of condescending tenderness, and a faint smile passed over her lips. Then, as if awakening to some horrible recollection, she started and turned towards the water.

"Did you not see him?" she cried; "I saw him—I knew him, all terrible as he looked." Covering her face with her hands, she burst into an agony of tears and leaned again on the shoulder of him who seemed now her last earthly friend.

How came he there, like an angel of deliverance, once more rushing between her and terrible death? The same arm that had checked the foaming steed

"Had buffeted the billows for her rescue,
And redeem'd her life, with half the loss of his."

Heaven, by a mysterious agency, seemed to have united them in such awful scenes, that the artificial barriers fortune had raised between them might be shaken down and destroyed.

But what was to become of them, thus separated from their companions, in a place where it was impossible for them to scale the bank; the air too, becoming hot and oppressive from the vicinity of the burning boat?

Roland rose, still supporting Linda, who now tried to rally her bewildered faculties and gird herself with fortitude to meet the difficulties that might still be before her. His clear and loud holloo, again and again repeated, went across the river, and was answered from the opposite shore. A dark object began to float in the distance, and soon the sound of dipping oars was heard.

"How many were saved?" cried Roland, as the little vessel approached within speaking distance of the spot where they stood.

"Eight in the yawl," was the answer; "three women, one child, and four men, including myself. How many have been drifted ashore I cannot tell,—an awful wreck," exclaimed the man, looking with horror on the charring and smouldering remains of the gallant boat.

With a sickening sensation Linda felt herself borne again on the current, which had so nearly proved her grave. And was it not her father's grave over which she was floating? She closed her eyes, lest some horrible apparition should glare at her from the water, and felt a calmness settling on her feelings as the measured cadence of the oars, and the gurgling that followed every splashing sound, fell on her ear. She was roused by the sudden reeling of the boat, and a loud exclamation from Roland. A wretched, piteous-looking figure was clinging to the side of the vessel, which he had clutched with the grasp of despair, uttering the most heart-rending moans and incoherent cries.

"Bear down on the opposite side," cried Roland to the man who guided the boat, and bending forward he seized the drowning wretch by the arms and dragged him into the vessel. Linda

gazed, in the wild hope that it might be her father, though she was sure she had seen him sink in the agonies of death. What would she have given for the power to relieve the sufferings of the poor creature thus saved from present death, probably only to linger in protracted anguish! It was dreadful to see him hold up his lacerated and bleeding hands, and feel that there was no balm to drop into the wounds. To see him writhing in pangs, that mocked description, and yet know there was no physician near.

"Oh, Roland," cried Linda, "you have saved me from a doom like this. A second time I owe my life to you,—to Heaven and you," she added, looking upward with a realization of God's omnipotent and omnipresent glory, such as she had never felt before. She remembered the words of the psalmist: "All thy waves and billows have gone over me." She remembered too, that he had said, "In the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer to the God of my life."

Let us not linger too long on this sad page of our young heroine's history. A boat bound for Mobile received the sufferers about the morning's dawn. The hours spent on that desolate shore, far from any human habitation, with drenched garments, shivering limbs, and aching hearts, (for almost all that remained had lost some friend in the wreck,) were not soon forgotten by the survivors of the Belle Creole.

CHAPTER XI.

ABOUT four weeks after the terrible catastrophe described in the last chapter, Linda sat by the side of Emily in the family sitting-room. The fright, anguish, and long exposure of that dreadful night had caused a nervous illness, from which she had but just recovered, and it was the first time that, dismissing the character of an invalid, she was permitted to leave her own apartment. In the meantime, through the considerate kindness of Emily, her wardrobe, which had been destroyed in the wreck, had been entirely renewed, and those mourning garments prepared, appropriate to her orphan condition. With cheeks pale from sorrow and indisposition, looking still fairer and more colourless, in contrast with her sable dress, and eyes darkened with *deeper meanings*, Linda was not the same bright and rosy being who had walked the hurricane deck of the Belle Creole. The loss of her father, under any circumstances, would have been long and deeply felt; for, notwithstanding the weakness of his character, he was a fond and doting parent, and all the love she would have lavished on her mother, had she been spared, flowed into the only natural channel open to receive it. But the horrible circumstances of his death, added to her chilling sense of bereavement, sometimes almost drove her to frenzy. The recollection of his convulsed and agonized features rising above the gurgling waters, then plunging never to rise again, haunted her by day and pursued her even in her dreams. Feelings of self-reproach, morbidly indulged, increased her melancholy. "I dared to upbraid him," she would exclaim; "that very night even I arraigned him as I would have done a criminal

before the bar of justice, and yet he forgave me. The last words that fell from his lips asked forgiveness of *me*."

Emily encouraged her to speak of her sorrow, for she knew that it is silent grief that dries up the heart; but, when she found her dwelling too long on the saddening theme she would change the subject to the heroism of Roland Lee. Then Linda's tearful eyes would beam with grateful emotion, and she would repeat again and again the story of her rescue, and the more than woman's tenderness with which he had guarded and sustained her through all succeeding trials, till she was encircled in the arms of her friend.

"You say he has called every day to inquire of my welfare," said Linda, the colour dawning on her pale cheek. "Oh! he is kind as he is brave; I owe him a life-long debt."

Emily was now a noble, high-minded young woman, awake to the noblest purposes of her being, and happy in the warm, pure exercise of her heart's best affections. It has been seen that pride was the predominant defect of her character; and, however softened this trait now was, the influence of early associations was still felt. She admired the bravery of Roland; she respected his virtues; but she was too aristocratic not to remember that his rank in life was not equal to her own. Judging Linda by herself, she never dreamed that the young pilot could awaken any other emotion than gratitude in her bosom.

"You do, indeed, owe him more than words can express," answered Emily, "and it must be an unspeakable gratification to you that you have it in your power to repay, though you must ever be grateful for the obligation."

"Repay!" cried Linda, her cheek glowing with a still brighter hue. "What do you mean, Emily?"

"That you have a splendid fortune, and, as he is poor and in a lowly condition, you will be able to assist his advance-

ment in life, and remunerate him in a manner that you could not do if he were in a higher station."

"And do you think I could offer money to Roland Lee, as a compensation for my life twice preserved from the most horrible of deaths?" exclaimed Linda, her bosom swelling at the thought of so poor a return to one of his magnanimous and lofty character. "Could I insult his delicacy—his pride—by such an offer? Oh! Emily, you do not know him, or you would never have suggested such a thing."

"Then you must pardon me a crime committed in ignorance," a slight suffusion passing over the marble of her face. "I have never seen him; for, whenever he has called, I have been in your chamber, and, though Mr. Carleton has spoken of him in the most enthusiastic terms, you know gentlemen do not attach so much value to refinement of manners as we do. I have no doubt he has great and noble qualities. Indeed, I know he has; but, educated, as he has been, and associated with a lower class of society, I cannot conceive of his possessing that sensitive delicacy which would shrink from the offer I suggested."

"Roland's education has been very different from what you imagine," said Linda, in a more subdued tone. "His father was once in affluent circumstances, and, in his early years, I doubt not he was as carefully attended as your father's sons. His mother is one of the most perfect ladies I ever saw. Gentle, dignified, and self-possessed, her society alone would be sufficient to polish the rudest nature, and, when you have seen Roland, I think you will acknowledge that he could not naturally have been rough or unrefined."

"Is he handsome?" asked Emily, with a true woman's curiosity.

"I scarcely know whether he would be thought handsome or not," replied Linda. "You must recollect that I have seen him only as a guardian angel, and I cannot be an impar-

tial judge. There was one moment"—here covering her face with her hands, as if some dark remembrance impeded her utterance, she remained silent a little while, then continued—"awakening from a death-like swoon, I beheld him looking down upon me by the light of the blazing boat and the struggling moonbeams. No, I cannot describe my emotions; but, should you ever know what it is to feel the weight of desolation that then pressed on my heart, and meet the glance of kindness, pity, and protection, that then beamed on me, you would not wonder at my gratitude."

"I do not wonder," said Emily; "it is a beautiful sentiment, and, in a heart as warm as yours, I know what its depth and strength must be. I only wish," continued the aristocratic Emily, "that he was a real gentleman, then you could marry him, and that would be a glorious way of cancelling the debt."

"It is of too sacred and solemn nature to be spoken of so lightly," replied Linda, too deeply wounded to speak with calmness. "I did not think that you, Emily, would thus have trifled with it; and, as to your interpretation of the word gentleman, though we have studied at the same school, and you are older, and ought to be wiser, than I, I trust I can define it more truly and more worthily."

"Forgive me," cried Emily, kissing Linda's now averted cheek; "you soar above me, as you ever did, and make me feel ashamed of my own inferiority. I wish I could overcome my foolish pride, and feel there were no real distinctions but those of virtue and talent. But early impressions are almost indelible. Of one thing, however, let me assure you: I have not spoken in wantonness, or with any intention of sporting with your feelings. Say that you believe me, Linda."

A silent embrace was a stronger assurance than words. Emily looked upon her young companion with increasing in-

terest and admiration. There was something in the dignity of her sentiments that rebuked her worldly wisdom, and threw over her the softening shadow of humility. It was a favourable moment for the introduction of the young pilot, and it was well he came.

"I am constrained to call this man a gentleman," said Emily to herself, as she gazed with earnest scrutiny on his entering figure. Clad in the plain, but elegant dress of an American citizen, he might have walked by the side of the proudest aristocrat of the land without being distinguished as one of lowlier station. Instead of veiling his worth under the shade of diffidence, as if conscious he was in the presence of his superiors, he had an air of even stately self-reliance—a firm and manly bearing that spoke of indwelling power. His manner, at first, even gave an impression of haughtiness; but this was soon removed by the expression of his frank, ingenuous countenance, and the smile of even boyish sweetness that occasionally played round his lips. The woman who looked on the face and form of Roland Lee would feel secure of a sympathizer in joy and sorrow, a protector in the hour of danger, and an avenger in that of wrong. His voice, too, had a deep and mellow tone—that greatest of all charms to a refined and cultivated ear.

Emily no longer wondered at the enthusiasm of Linda in defending her preserver, and claiming for him the respect due to a gentleman. She acknowledged herself, that she would no more dare to offer money as a reward, to such a man, than to a prince of the royal blood. She watched with intense interest the countenances of both when they greeted each other. It was not strange that Linda's hand should tremble, and her cheek change from red to pale, from pale to red; or that Roland should address her in an agitated voice, considering the awful circumstances in which they had last met; but Emily's early initiation in the mysteries of the heart had made her skilful in

interpreting its hieroglyphics, and she began to tremble for the future happiness of her friend. She knew the persecution she had endured from her step-mother and her fiery son, and she saw in perspective many dark and stormy scenes.

Roland, as he sat by the side of Linda, in that elegant and fashionably furnished apartment, with the large dark eyes of Mrs. Carleton fixed in unconscious earnestness upon him, would gladly have exchanged the security and constraint of his present situation for the thrilling, maddening scenes, in which he had last met her. He thought of her clinging to his side in the whelming waters, clasped in his arms on the lonely bank, leaning on his shoulder in the floating bark, and abandoned in all the confidingness of innocence to his protecting tenderness, during the remainder of that dreadful night. He recalled her image, as she lay in her dripping garments, with wet, disordered tresses, and cheeks of alabaster whiteness, so near his throbbing heart, and sighed to think it would be now deemed an act of presumption to take her hand in his, save when extended in courtesy, at the moment of greeting. He did not know that his soul had passed into his eyes, or that the dark eyes still turned towards him were reading its vivid characters.

But Roland did not long sit in this abstracted mood. He roused himself and entered into conversation with an ease and address, which convinced Emily of the truth of Linda's remarks with regard to his early education. She inquired for his mother, and learned that she resided with a widowed sister on a small plantation, situated on the bay, where he had frequent opportunities of visiting her, during his floating life. Linda told him of their visit to his deserted cottage; of the long and melancholy grass growing over the paths, the rank and trailing vines, the ramble on the silver creek, and the sight of the bark canoe.

"Ah! that bark canoe," exclaimed Roland, kindling at

the reminiscences of his boyhood, "how I love it, the cradle of my boyish fancy! If all the dreams indulged in that rude vessel are ever realized," continued he, laughing, "I mean to have it placed over me as a monument, when I am dead, with an effigy of myself placed within, holding in its hand the story of Robinson Crusoe."

"Was it the perusal of Robinson Crusoe that first inspired you with a passion for the water?" asked Linda.

"Yes. Never shall I forget the enthusiasm excited in my mind by the history of that island king. But a work which made a still deeper impression was an account of a mutiny on board the ship *Bounty*, or *Pandora*, I do not recollect which, for the events, not the names, are stamped on my memory. There was a British captain belonging to that ship, who, forced by the mutineers into a small boat with about sixteen men, was left to drift out on the immense ocean to perish with his starving crew. But with dauntless energy he guided that frail boat over the waves of the Pacific, from the islands of the South Sea to the northern shores of Australia; not only ruling the billows of the ocean, but the stormier spirits of those wild and famishing men. There was a moral sublimity in that man's character, of which I never could think without a burst of admiration."

"I loved those pure, truth-telling islanders," said Linda, roused from her melancholy by the ardour of Roland's manner; "that lovely colony established by the repentant mutineers in beautiful Otaheite. Its description reminded me of the garden of Eden, and I could not help wishing, while reading it, to fly away from the world, and dwell with those simple, good beings, in that sweet wilderness."

These remarks produced an animated discussion, in which Emily and Mr. Carleton joined, on the comparative enjoyments of a civilized and savage life, and the merits of the two rival elements, earth and water.

"I should think," said Emily, turning to Roland, "that your enthusiasm must have received an effectual check by the fatal accident which occurred to the Belle Creole."

"Not in the least," replied Roland. "I love to contend with danger; and difficulties only give new ardour to a pursuit. Through life we are liable to accidents and death, but where are they accompanied with such indescribable pomp and sublimity as when fire and water seem contending for mastery, and battling in their might?"

Linda shuddered, and Roland dismissed the theme.

Thus evening after evening passed away, and Linda almost forgot that she had a step-mother, whose summons might recall her to a home from which her father's death seemed for ever to have severed her. Mr. Carleton, at Linda's request, had written to Mrs. Walton, giving her an account of the death of her husband, the rescue of Linda, and of her wish to remain for the present with her friend. She was waiting with anxiety the answer to this letter, though determined to resist any command for her return, assured that nothing but persecution and trial awaited her at Pine Grove, when a messenger arrived, who, though not altogether unexpected, was not the less dreaded.

How peaceful and pleasant every thing looked in that charming apartment! The elegant taste of a young and affianced bride had fitted and adorned it just sufficient for a domestic retreat, without overloading it with those costly ornaments proper only for a magnificent saloon. Books, music, painting, Mr. Carleton loved them all, and so did Emily. But better than books, music, or painting, he loved a game of chess; and to please her husband, Emily had become a deep student at the game, so that she might engage as his opponent, when no more powerful champion entered the list. They sat this night at a little table, so intent on the movements of the ivory combatants, that they scarcely listened to the sweet notes that

were warbling on the opposite side of the room. Yet once in a while, Emily would look up and smile, while her husband was meditating some tremendous move, and cast a glance at the piano, where Linda was seated, with Roland leaning over her chair. Linda had a soft, exquisitely modulated voice, to which Roland sung a deep, mellow second, making the richest harmony. He knew nothing of music scientifically ; but he could imitate the notes of every bird of the forest, and catch the air of any song after having once heard its melody. And Linda wanted no better accompaniment than the songster who had practised most by the light of the stars, while gliding on the bosom of the winding Alabama. It was while Emily was looking up, with one of her moonlight smiles, and those two voices were mingling in a sweet and prolonged chorus, that the door was opened, and Robert Graham ushered into the apartment. Emily started so suddenly that the chess-board overturned, and kings, queens, and bishops rolled ingloriously on the carpet. Linda rose from the piano, and stood transfixed, every drop of blood forsaking her cheeks and lips, while Roland, who knew, the moment he beheld the tall intruder, that it must be that "handsome, brilliant Robert," whose name was branded on his memory, returned his haughty stare with a glance equally haughty, and kept his station at Linda's side. Robert paused a moment at the threshold, to take in all the bearings of the scene he interrupted, and though his jealous passions were roused by the proximity of the noble-looking young man, whose melodious accents still rung in his ears, he dreamed not it was that same *plebeian boy*, of whom he had so often spoken in scorn and contempt. Mr. Carleton's respectful, laconic letter had not entered into particulars, and in his hurried mention of facts he had not told the name of the preserver of Linda's life. His wife had told him enough of the step-mother's character to convince him that it would be a matter of no interest to her ; therefore Robert was

ignorant that Linda owed her preservation a second time to Roland Lee.

Linda's excessive paleness, for her face was now literally white as marble, and her deep mourning dress, struck Robert with painful interest. He sprang towards her, grasped both hands in his, with a force of which he was not aware, and bent upon her those eyes of intolerable brightness, whose beams seemed to scorch while they shone.

"You have suffered, Linda," said he, in a subdued voice, "I see it. I grieve for it."

When she recovered sufficient composure, she introduced her friends Mr. and Mrs. Carleton, and then turned to Roland Lee. Why did the blood rush back in burning torrents to her cheeks, and her lips tremble with agitation, as she passed through the same ceremony with these two young men? Robert started; gave one glance of astonishment, which changed into insufferable disdain, while his face became the colour of scarlet.

"I hope Mrs. Carleton will excuse me," said he, with a strong effort at self-possession, "for the abrupt manner in which I have intruded upon her. But I have not a moment to lose, for the boat which brought me returns early in the morning, and it would be better that Linda should go on board to-night. My mother cannot consent to her longer stay, and I am commissioned to bear her home."

"I cannot suffer her to leave me," exclaimed Emily; "she is not yet recovered from the effects of her last journey. Mr. Carleton wrote and informed your mother that she was to remain with me much longer. I have had no visit yet. She has been sick and suffering. Indeed! Indeed! I cannot, shall not let her go."

"I am sorry to dispute a lady's will," replied Robert, with an imperious bow, "but my mother's claims are paramount, and her commands invested with higher authority than yours."

The feeblest invalid can travel in safety in a boat, where she can enjoy every comfort and luxury the land can furnish, and I see no evidence of Miss Walton's claims to that character."

"No, no," said Mr. Carleton, "it is out of the question. Sit down, Mr. Graham, and enjoy the evening with us—the morning—days if you like, but I cannot trust her on that river so soon. This visit has been a long-promised one, and it is scarcely yet begun. Why, one of my inducements for marrying was to see the little brown-eyed girl, the pet of Rose Bower. Come, Mr. Lee, join your persuasions to ours. You have a right to be heard. Linda cannot go without the permission of her guardian and deliverer."

"I should like to know what right this gentleman has to interfere," cried Robert, measuring Roland with an indignant glance, "or who has constituted *him* the guardian of Miss Linda Walton."

"Heaven, Robert, who made him my preserver," interrupted Linda, before Roland could frame the haughty reply rising to his lips. "Had it not been for him, I had shared my father's watery grave. His previous claims to gratitude and esteem you already know; and I should hope have learned to appreciate. He is not only my friend, but the friend of those whose guest I am, and for their sakes, if not for mine, Robert, I expect you will remember what politeness, if not feeling, requires."

"Linda, I must speak with you alone," said Robert. "I cannot say what I would in the presence of strangers. Mrs. Carleton, allow me the privilege of a few moments' private conversation with Miss Walton, in an adjoining room."

"No, no," cried Linda, shrinking back with undisguised reluctance. "There are no strangers here. You have nothing to say, but what the whole world may hear."

"I fear I am, indeed, an intruder," said Roland, addressing Linda in a low voice. "You will not depart?"

"No," said Linda, in a still lower tone; "I shall see you again on the morrow. * Roland—go, I entreat you."

"I should not have lingered thus long," added he, raising his voice; "but I would have it fully understood, this apology is addressed alone to you."

The eyes of the young men met, as Roland passed through the door, and mutual defiance spoke in their beams.

"Linda," cried Robert, "there is no time to lose. Indeed, you must accompany me. I come as my mother's representative and clothed with her authority. Surely, you will not continue to resist it."

"I do," answered Linda, drawing away the hand he had seized. "I have a sanction higher than hers, to remain where I am. My father gave me his permission, and death has only added solemnity to his will."

Robert walked the room with a resounding tread. Emily gazed upon him with mingled admiration and terror. The striking beauty of his face and form, and the dark, violent passions expressed in his countenance, formed a contrast painful to witness. Linda gazed upon him also, with a troubled and varying countenance. At length, approaching him, and laying her hand gently on his arm, she said, with much emotion, "Let us go into the other room, Robert; we have indeed much to say to each other, in which our friends cannot be interested."

A ray of brightness illumined his gloomy face, and eagerly snatching her hand, he led her into the next apartment.

"Now, Robert," she added, "sit down by my side, and listen to me one moment in calmness. It grieves me, indeed it does, to seem ungrateful for the kindness you have manifested in coming thus far to be my companion homeward. But if you could imagine all I have suffered, you would not wonder that I shrink from exposing myself to similar dangers,

before my nerves have recovered strength to sustain them. I need the soothing tenderness of Emily—I need her sympathy and love. Ask your own heart, Robert, if I should return to Pine Grove, where would be the tenderness and sympathy that would minister to the wounds of an orphan heart, and chase its dark remembrance?”

“Linda, fifty thousand Emilys could not lavish upon you half the love and tenderness that fills my single heart.”

“Ah, Robert, that would not make up for the want of woman’s sympathy.”

“My mother”—

“Speak not of your mother,” interrupted Linda. “She never gave me one look of love, one word of tenderness. If, when my father lived, who attempted, though often vainly, to interpose the shield of parental affection between her despotism and me, she almost crushed me with its weight, how could I resist it now, alone and unprotected?”

“Unprotected!” exclaimed Robert. “Shall not I be your protector—your husband? Once mine, a part of myself, she will transfer to you half of the love now bestowed on me. It is only when you oppose her will, you find her hard and inflexible. You weep, Linda; you are softening, relenting. Come, she waits to welcome you as her daughter, to embrace you as the bride of her son.”

“Robert!”—

“No—no—speak not to me in that tone; I cannot bear it, I had rather be crushed at once under the icebergs of the Arctic seas, than be addressed in that freezing tone, than meet that congealing glance. It drives me mad, Linda. What have I done to merit this hatred, this contempt? In what gift of nature or fortune am I so unfortunate as to be lacking, that I cannot satisfy your fastidious taste? I have kept my pledge. I have toiled and struggled, and won the meed

for which I panted. I have gained name and fame; and now I claim the fulfilment of your promise, written in my own blood, and worn next my heart, ever since we parted."

"I know not what you mean, Robert," said Linda, trembling, as he drew forth a paper from his bosom, and held it before her eyes.

"Did you not promise, when we last parted, that you would think of no one—love no one, till we met again. Here are the characters, traced in the red of my own veins. Have you fulfilled your pledge?"

The eyes of Robert seemed to burn into Linda's throbbing heart. Hers bowed beneath them, and her hand instinctively grasped the arm of the sofa for support.

"I remember saying something of the kind, to calm your excited passions. But, whatever it was, it extended only to my residence in Rose Bower. I knew not then of the events which the future had in store."

"By heavens, Linda," exclaimed Robert, starting up and standing before her, face to face, "your agitation confirms your shame. I would not, could not believe, but now I know it all. This Roland Lee, this obscure, low-born pilot, this proud, haughty upstart, has dared to come between me and my rights; but he had better beware. He had better not cross the lion in his path. By Him who made me, sooner than you should disgrace yourself by such an alliance, I would carry you down into the grave with me, though my own hand dealt the death-blow."

"Cruel, insulting!" cried Linda, rising and fixing upon him a glance, where every contending passion seemed struggling for mastery. "You forget yourself, sir. You know not whom you address or whom you accuse. As for myself, I care not what you think of me; but I will vindicate one, of whose worth and nobleness you cannot even dream

Roland Lee never uttered to me one sentiment warmer than esteem, tenderer than pity. He has never presumed on the mighty obligations he has imposed upon me; but even if he had, I tell thee, Robert, he is your equal and mine—equal did I say—superior!—and the man lives not who dares repeat a second time, the words you have just now uttered to me.”

She approached the door with a rapid step, which Robert, withering under her indignation, durst not oppose, but pausing, as she laid her hand upon the latch, and looking back with a moistened eye, “Robert,” she said, “I cannot bear to leave you in anger, for you know not what you say. Only learn to love me as a brother, and I will be to you the tenderest of sisters, the truest of friends. But, as for any other tie binding us together, it is in vain to think of it. Such a union would be unnatural and unblest. Think of it no more, Robert, think of it no more!”

She opened the door slowly, for Robert, instead of following her, as she had feared, sunk back on the sofa, and covered his face with his handkerchief. This attitude of unresisting sorrow, so unexpected, so touching in contrast with his late fierceness and impetuosity, melted her at once. She could not leave him so. She drew near, and taking the hand which lay passive by his side, pressed it in both her own. “Oh, Robert, let us not part in anger!”

Robert lifted the handkerchief from his face, and Linda uttered a startling scream.

“Oh, my God! Robert, what have you done?”

His cheek was as colourless as the linen which was stained here and there with streaks of blood.

Mr. Carleton and Emily rushed in at the sound of Linda’s cry, and the house was immediately a scene of confusion. A physician was summoned, who relieved Linda’s agonized terrors, by assuring them it was only a very slight blood-vessel

which was ruptured—attended with no danger, and that all he needed was perfect quietude.

Linda hovered round him with tender solicitude, feeling as if she had just escaped the horror of being a murderer. She felt the deeper compassion as he was gentle and docile. The stormy passions which had caused the rupture appeared to have subsided with the flowing blood.

“If he urges me now to accompany him,” thought Linda sadly, “I cannot refuse—I dare not rouse again the fearful strife.”

But Robert, though the next morning he insisted on his own departure, seemed to have yielded his will to hers. They all pleaded, nay insisted, that he should remain; the physician laid his commands on him, but in vain. He was perfectly well, he said, though his colourless face belied his words.

“I must leave you, Emily,” said Linda. “I could resist his authority and pride, but his generosity subdues me. I cannot let him depart alone. My destiny is darkening and closing around me. I shall soon have nothing left but submission.”

“I will accompany him myself,” cried Mr. Carleton, with generous eagerness. “I am sure I shall be a much more efficient nurse than a young lady who always faints at the sight of blood. I think, too, I shall be able to give a *quietus* to his mother that will prevent her farther interference.”

Linda could have knelt at his feet and blest him for his kindness, and Emily was magnanimous enough to give an assent to the arrangement, though the horrors of the burning boat were still too fresh in her memory not to fill her with sad misgivings. When Robert learned Mr. Carleton’s determination, he opposed it most strenuously, but the latter maintained his resolution with such gay and good-humoured obstinacy, that Robert was constrained to yield.

"Forgive me, Robert," cried the weeping Linda, sinking into his arms, when the moment of departure came. "Forgive me all the pain I have caused you, and believe me more unhappy than yourself. Continue to be what you now are, and when I return you shall find me all a brother's heart can wish."

"I ask but one thing, Linda," said Robert, in a low voice ; "I claim nothing for myself, but return to us *free*. Promise me but this, and I will depart content, if not happy "

Could Linda refuse a request, urged by lips from which the life-blood had so lately flowed ? "I promise," she replied, in scarcely articulate accents. A quick, passionate embrace, a trembling pressure on her pale cheek, and she was left sobbing in the arms of Emily.

CHAPTER XII.

ABOUT a week after Robert's departure, Linda sat reading in the sitting-room alone. Emily had retired early, on the plea of a sick headache, and Linda intended soon to follow, waiting but to finish a few pages of a work which fascinated her imagination. The rain was driving against the windows in violent gusts, making the casements shiver as it fell, and every now and then the wind would swell and rave through the trees, and then die away with a sudden, deep sigh, as if repenting the rude manner in which it had twisted the young branches and scattered their green leaves in the blast. Linda looked up from her book and listened to the sobs of the stormy gale. It reminded her of Robert, and she sighed at the wreck his ungoverned passions might cause. It is true they had subsided like that raving wind, but they retained all their strength, and might burst forth at any moment in the whirlwind or the tempest, desolating the moral world. Perhaps she thought of another, for her eyes wandered dreamingly over the pages, and the spell of genius no longer held her captive. The moaning sound of the wind made her feel very sad, and, yielding to the oppression that weighed down her spirits, she suffered her arm to fall across the table, her cheek to droop lower and lower, till it pressed the open pages of her book, and then closed her eyes to keep back the tears that gathered heavy on their lids.

The door opened, but Linda raised not her head. She thought it a servant; for who would come abroad such a night as this? A hand gently laid on her shoulder, and a sad-toned, mellow voice, uttering the name of Linda, made her start and tremble.

"Roland Lee ! what brought you here in such a driving storm ? You are pale—you are agitated : tell me what has happened."

"You will think me very weak when you learn it is the thought of saying farewell that has shaken my nerves thus. It is so much sooner than I anticipated, that"—he paused, but Linda was silent, and he continued, in a hurried manner—"I have been appointed pilot of a new boat just completed, which is baptized the *Evening Star*. The captain is a noble-hearted man, and a warm, disinterested friend of mine. It is to run on the Mississippi—that great river—the winding ocean of America. Linda, I ought to rejoice, for I cannot afford to be an idle man ; but can I, when I must leave you in a few hours, unknowing when or where we shall meet again ?"

Linda was terrified at the anguish she felt at the thought of parting with Roland. It swept over her so suddenly and powerfully, it deprived her of utterance or motion. Too much agitated himself to comprehend the emotions that chained her tongue, he was pained by her silence, and went on more rapidly still, as if fearful of a pause in his present excited state of mind.

"Before I leave you, Linda, as you have allowed me to call you by the name dear to my boyhood, let me thank you for the condescension you have ever shown to one on whom many like yourself would have looked down upon as an inferior. How I have blessed your gentleness and kindness, none but my God knoweth. I have tried not to be presumptuous ; I have endeavoured to remember the difference in our fortunes——"

"Talk not of presumption, Roland," interrupted Linda, with a burst of feeling wholly irrepressible. "Be not so unjust to yourself or me. What do I not owe you ? Leave me not with such a burden of gratitude weighing upon my

heart. Show me some way in which I can prove that I am not altogether an ingrate."

"Do not speak of gratitude, Linda; I cannot bear the word."

"Alas! I am a bankrupt even in words," she cried, looking down, her cheeks covered with a deepening glow.

There was an expression in Roland's eye she dared not interpret, yet it quickened every pulsation of her heart. Slowly drawing from her finger a glittering ring—"This ring," she added, "is one of the few links that bind me to the past. Almost all my treasures were buried in the wreck; but this was on my finger when you rescued me from a fiery or a watery grave, and it may be to you a memento of the life you have preserved."

Her hand trembled as she extended it to Roland, and a mist covered her sight.

"I cannot take it—I dare not," exclaimed he, dropping the hand which for one moment he had imprisoned in his passionate grasp. "I cannot take it as a pledge of gratitude; it would only mock the wild beating of a proud and too aspiring heart. No, no, Linda, rather let me forget you for ever, since your remembrance must henceforth constitute the misery as well as the glory of my life."

"Speak to me, Roland, in this moment, perhaps the last we shall ever pass together, as if I were the poorest, humblest maiden of the land. Forget that I am so unfortunate as to be an heiress; meet me, as I am, your equal, and tell me why my remembrance must make your existence wretched."

Thus addressed, with such pure, earnest, beseeching, yet modest eyes raised to his, is it wonderful that Roland forgot all the strong resolutions with which he had armed himself, and suffered his soul to gush forth in one full, deep stream of long-repressed passion? He did not know that he knelt; he was borne down by the tide of his overpowering emotions;

he knew not what words he uttered—he only felt that the hour was come when he must speak or die. Seldom has man felt or woman inspired a worship so single or so pure. His spirit was full of enthusiasm—that divine fire which gives warmth and soul to every virtue, and purifies the passions from the alloy of earth. In boyhood, Nature reigned the unrivalled mistress of his soul, and, whether she appeared clothed in clouds or sunbeams, on the mountain or in the valley, he loved her still; but, when she came gliding through the waves, in her mantle of azure fringed with white, with the stars on her bosom or the sun on her brow, his love became adoration. This impassioned worship, Linda, the fair young traveller, was the first who ever shared. The image of the sweet, little girl, with soft, loving eyes and angelic smile, followed him wherever he went, and whispered to him of gentle things, when he roamed the forest or floated on the stream. Again he met her in the glow and the freshness of her girlhood—met her in those thrilling scenes which waken to sensibility the coldest heart. What, then, was their effect on such a heart as Roland's? We have seen, and Linda now felt and knew.

And she, if she had loved Roland before, when the glance of his eye and the tones of his voice had conveyed to her the *hope* that she was beloved, how did she receive this outpouring of the heart and soul—this revelation of each bosom-thought and wish so long cherished in silence and pride? The moment that woman has an *assurance* of the love which she would barter the universe, were it hers, to obtain, must be the happiest of her existence. Linda had reached this crisis of her being. Though there was sorrow behind her and darkness before, she had touched one bright, luminous point—one dazzling focus of bliss—where her spirit fainted from the excess of joy and light.

The first word which broke the silence that lingered like a

holy spell around them, was "Robert," uttered by Linda, in a startling tone. He seemed to be gliding between them with ghost-like solemnity, reminding her of her promise to return *free*, and threatening her with that wedlock in the grave, to which he had doomed her, in preference to a union with Roland. She saw, in the future, scenes of violence and blood; and, shuddering, she drew back from Roland's arms, while the warm roses, whose bloom was deepened by the breath of love, faded on her cheek.

"No, no!" she cried, veiling her eyes with her hand, as if to shut out the prophetic vision; "I dare not promise to be yours. I have pledged my word to return free. I feared to refuse, lest the life-blood should again gush forth. While Robert lives, I never can wed another. Hush! you don't know him as I know him. You could not even dream of the strength, the frenzy of his passions. He would pursue you with unrelenting vengeance to the world's end. A three-fold sacrifice would be the awful result. No, Roland, I cannot hazard such consequences; the guilt of murder would be on my soul! I can love you—live for you—die *for* you, Roland, but not *with* you."

In vain Roland talked of bearing her to some sweet spot on the banks of the Mississippi,

"Where the bright eyes of angels only
Should come around them, to behold
A paradise so pure and lonely."

She remembered the prostrate form of Robert, the pallid cheek, the blood-stained handkerchief, and she still repeated, "I should be a murderer." But, while she resisted his entreaties, she breathed to him sentiments like these to cheer him in the parting hour—

"Yes, if there be some happier sphere,
Where fadeless truth, like ours, is dear—

If there be any land of rest,
For those who love, and ne'er forget,—
Oh, comfort thee—for safe and bless'd
We'll meet in that calm region yet."

Roland did not despond. He was young, brave, and hopeful. No dangers daunted, no difficulties impeded his spirit. Assured of Linda's love, the future spread out before him a boundless firmament, studded with suns, before whose brightness all clouds melted away. He pitied Robert, but he feared him not. Passion, unfed, must waste away and die, even if it have the strength of a giant.

"See, is not that an omen of happiness?" exclaimed he, pointing to the heavens through the parted curtains. A single, glorious star, pillowed on a bed of azure, was shining below the dark canopy of clouds that hung gloomily above.

And long after Roland was gone, Linda sat in the silence of night gazing from her window at that one burning star, though ten thousand others now glittered in the blue, unclouded heavens, and mingled their silvery effulgence in the milky-way.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. CARLETON returned at the expected time, but not alone. Emily, in her joy at meeting him after their first separation, saw no one but her husband; but Linda beheld the veiled figure that accompanied him, and she recollected when she had first seen it descend from her father's carriage, about eight years before. A cold shudder ran through her frame, when the green veil was lifted, and she beheld again those stony, flint-like eyes, that dry, shining, parchment forehead, and those pale, shrivelled lips. More horrible and unnatural than ever looked the white semi-circles of her brows, in contrast with the black dress which she wore in mockery of her widowhood.

"I thought I would come myself," said the soft voice that always made her blood curdle, "since Robert was so unsuccessful. We cannot be without you any longer at Pine-Grove."

"How is Robert?" asked Linda, with real anxiety, conscious she was the cause of his indisposition.

"He is not well," replied his mother. "He looks very badly, but with a little of your nursing he will soon be better."

"For mercy's sake, Edmund," exclaimed Emily, when Linda had retired with Mrs. Walton, who wished to change her travelling apparel, "what made you bring that horrid woman with you? Why, she looks like the witch of Endor. She has half-petrified me already; and then that gliding serpent voice, I hear it hissing yet. Poor Linda, how I pity her. Oh! Edmund, how came you to let her come with you?"

"Because I could not help it," answered her husband, laughing at the unaffected horror of Emily's countenance. "I knew nothing of her intention, till I saw her trunk and band-box at the side of mine, and was told the lady placed herself under my protection. I was obliged to make a bow, and submit with the best grace possible, though in my heart I wished her with Pharaoh's host, at the bottom of the Red Sea. Linda will be compelled now to return, for that woman has a will of iron—nay, more inflexible than iron; for the metal will bend after passing through the furnace, but I question whether the power exists that can fuse the elements of her nature."

"And Robert, Edmund, what do you think of him?"

"Why, I pity him, Emily, from the bottom of my heart. Were he left to himself, I think he would give up a pursuit that makes Linda wretched, without advancing his own happiness. But his mother is constantly feeding the worst passions of his nature. Heavens! it is strange, the influence that woman exercises over her household, yet she never raises her voice louder than you have heard it. I think," added he, after a pause, "that Robert will win the day, and that Linda will yield at last. He is very handsome, and such impassioned love might move a heart of stone."

"You forget Roland Lee."

"No; but his pride is greater than his love, and he will die without revealing it, from the fear of being thought mercenary and presumptuous."

Emily, whose aristocratic prejudices had long since yielded to the charm of Roland's manners, told her husband all that Linda had confided to her, of the avowed attachment subsisting between Roland and herself; and Mr. Carleton sympathized as deeply as his wife in the feelings she described.

"Poor Linda!" again repeated Emily. "I know not what will become of her. I should tremble myself at the idea of her

marrying Roland, for Robert would run mad and kill himself, or her, or him, or all three. Oh, if I could only hope to see her one day as happy as I am, her wildest dreams of romance could ask no more."

Mr. Carleton smiled tenderly on his wife, and reiterated the conjugal wish. The entrance of Linda and her step-mother put a stop to their confidential conversation, and Emily was forced to play the polite hostess to this unwelcome and formidable woman. She looked, if possible, still more disagreeable, divested of her bonnet and shawl, for the hard, sharp outlines of her features were more distinctly observed.

"You must not think of depriving me of Linda," Emily ventured to say. "We planned this visit in Rose Bower, and talked of a thousand pleasures we have not yet had an opportunity of enjoying."

"She has already been here five weeks."

"But she has been sick. I always count sick days as blanks."

"I shall remain a few days to attend to some shopping," replied Mrs. Walton: "she must be ready to return with me then. I have particular reasons for wishing her at home. I was very glad of so favourable an opportunity of travelling with your husband."

"Oh! that I had kept him at home," groaned Emily within herself. She cast a dismal glance at Linda, on whose cheek a bright red spot was burning, of the same dye as that which stained Cæsar's brow.

"I should like the assistance of your taste, Mrs. Carleton," continued Mrs. Walton, "if it will not be too much trouble. I wish to purchase some dresses for Linda. You can direct me to the most fashionable stores."

"Thanks to Emily's kindness," said Linda, looking sadly at her mourning dress; "I have an ample supply. You are very kind, but indeed it is not necessary."

"You need not trouble yourself about it," said the imperturbable woman. "I will go out to-morrow morning with Mrs. Carleton, and you can do as you please about coming with us."

"Put on your bonnet, Linda," said Emily, running up stairs, after Mrs. Walton, equipped in her severe-looking black bonnet and green veil, entered the room. "Your step-mother seems in such an obliging mood, you ought to enjoy it with me."

"There's something hidden, I fear, under this seeming kindness," answered Linda, mournfully.

"She has the most singular countenance I ever saw," continued Emily, putting on her gloves. "I wonder where Robert got his beauty. I suspect his father must have been a handsome man."

"I have been told that he was," replied Linda, sighing at the remembrance of her own father.

Mrs. Walton was unusually gracious, and in every store where they stopped, she attributed the broad and prolonged stare fixed upon her, as a tribute to her dignified and imposing appearance.

"Have you any handsome white satin?—any rich blonde lace?" were the startling interrogations that met Linda's ear. What could she want with white satin and blonde lace, when they were both in deep mourning?

"I thought you wished to purchase some dresses for Linda," remarked Emily, as the lady fixed upon some satin and lace, which she declared superior to any she had seen.

"And so I do," she replied, ordering the required number of yards to be measured off.

"Stop, madam," said Linda, shuddering as if she had seen directions given for her shroud. "You forget that I am in mourning. I cannot wear that dress. Indeed, you must not get it."

"You will wear it when occasion requires," said her step-mother, turning again to the merchant, and asking for white gloves and shoes. Linda cast a despairing glance at Emily. She could not venture upon a scene in that public place. She dared not utter the words burning on her lips, but sat like a victim, about to be bound to the stake.

"Had you not better wait till she does require them?" interposed Emily. "I shall be happy to make purchases for you at any time. Satin and lace both become yellow when long laid aside."

"There is no danger of their turning yellow," said Mrs. Walton, continuing the purchase.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Linda, starting up, and forgetting in her excitement where she was. "What shall I do?"

"The young lady seems ill," said the gentleman behind the counter, looking compassionately at the young and beautiful face, wearing an expression of such intense distress.

"We can return home now," said Mrs. Walton, directing her packages to be put in the carriage. Linda uttered not a word during their homeward ride. She went in silence to her chamber, where her step-mother followed, and, one by one, put the articles she had purchased in her travelling trunk. When the last bundle was deposited, and the trunk locked, Mrs. Walton rose from her kneeling position, and met the eyes of Linda fixed steadfastly upon her. There was something in their expression that made her turn her head hastily aside, and she pretended to be looking for her handkerchief, on the other side of the room.

"May I ask for what purpose you have been kind enough to purchase those dresses, madam?" inquired Linda.

"I should think no explanation was necessary," was the cold reply. "I intend my daughter-in-law shall appear as becomes her property and mine. You know what is customary for a bride to wear."

"Talk not of bridal garments to me," exclaimed Linda, passionately. "I would sooner exchange these sad-coloured robes for my grave-clothes, than put on the marriage finery you have purchased."

"I had hoped," replied the step-mother, "that having learned by this time the uselessness of opposing my will, you were prepared to yield, without such unbecoming violence. But, instead of becoming more gentle and easy to be persuaded, you are more rebellious and headstrong than ever. I sent my son to bring you home, and you dared to disobey, treating him with scorn and contempt. Yes," she added, grinding her teeth, as if to whet her hidden passion, "you have done what no one yet has had the hardihood to do, openly and boldly refused obedience to my commands. Poor, pitiful thing! did you expect to do it with impunity? You forgot you had no weak father by you, to uphold you in your disobedience and folly, and try, but in vain, to separate you from my power."

"Oh! my father," cried Linda, clasping her hands wildly together, "must I hear your sacred memory thus profaned? Woman, if you had seen him as I saw him, crisped and blackened, quivering in agonies too terrible to think of, the remembrance would haunt you to your dying day. You would not dare to insult his name, or heap persecution on his helpless daughter. Would to heaven I had perished with him, rather than live to be the victim of your tyranny."

"You can talk well, very well, Miss Linda. You learned something at school. You took lessons in rhetoric, I believe; but there are some lessons I can teach you better than Madam Reveire. We have a long account to settle, and a day of reckoning will soon come. You have stolen from me, by your vile arts, the affections of my son. I wanted him to marry you for your fortune, for I've sworn that shall be his; but that he should be such a fool as to think of loving you in earnest,

I would not have believed it. To hear him talk of his happiness being blasted for ever, and by you !—Ungrateful, hard-hearted creature; you have destroyed his health, you have endangered his life. I do not believe you would shed one tear, if you saw him dead at your feet.”

Her dry lips began to quiver, and a tear actually moistened her glazed and pitiless-looking eyes. There was one vulnerable place in her heart. The dew of the cavern had not all hardened into stone.

Linda caught that sign of human sensibility, and hailed it as the pilgrim hails the fountain in the burning desert. She had a mother's heart, and might be made to feel for her. Springing forward, she cast herself on her knees before her, and wound her arms round her dark raiments.

“Oh, madam, I do pity Robert. I love him as a brother. I would sacrifice my life to restore him to health and happiness, if either have been lost through me. But I never wanted him to love me with any thing but fraternal affection. I told him so two years ago. I told you the same. Oh! you must remember it. You know I never deceived him. Force me not, I pray, force me not into this marriage. It would kill us both, for the more he loves me, the more wretched he would be. I will go to him, and, if he is sick, I will watch him like the fondest, tenderest of sisters, if you will ask no more. You shall never have cause to reproach me for rebellion and pride. I will show you all the respect and obedience of a daughter. Every night your name shall go up, mingled with blessings to the orphan's God. Nay, you must not leave me. You are moved. I see it. You cannot conceal it. You will not harden your heart against me. You will be touched with compassion for the fatherless, motherless girl, who prays you to have pity on her helplessness and youth.”

Thus supplicated Linda, with her white arms, from which the sleeves drooped back, still wrapped round the widow's

sable folds, and her upturned, glistening eyes, pleading with an angel's eloquence. Yes ! the rock was moved. The tear, that had trembled for some time on the stony surface, rolled slowly and reluctantly, like wintry sleet, down her sallow cheek. Still the rock was harder than that smitten by the Jewish prophet's wand. A fountain gushed forth at his touch, but this sweet suppliant extracted only one tiny drop.

"Be kind to Robert," said she, holding out her hand to Linda, "and you shall find a mother in me."

This was equivocal consolation, for kindness to Robert, in her acceptance of the expression, might embrace a wide meaning: still Linda felt comforted.

"*She can feel ; she is human,*" repeated she to herself: "she is not made all of granite, and I may yet hope."

With the elasticity of youth, her spirit rebounded from the pressure of despair, and a gleam of brightness dawned on the darkness of the future. Robert had shown some delicacy, and his mother one touch of feeling. That night she sat at her casement, and sought the star of Roland from all the innumerable host of heaven ; and as its silver-beaming eye returned her earnest and adoring gaze, that "glorious voice," which bath no real sound, whispered to her soul of everlasting joy, never-ending peace, and undying love.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE sad parting with her friends, the monotonous passage on the river, were over, and Linda was once more wending her homeward way, near the shores of the Alabama. Weary and abstracted, she leaned back in the carriage, and looked out on the gathering shades of twilight till they deepened into night, which grew darker and darker as they plunged deeper into the pine forest that skirted the road. It is the most melancholy thing in the world to travel through a pine forest at night. To look out and see nothing but the tall, dim, stately columns, crowned with their dark capitals, stretching on in everlasting continuity—others, yet still the same—and hear the mournful rustling of the boughs above the head; it seems like passing through some grand, interminable corridor, where invisible minstrels are chanting low, dirge-like music, and imagination looks beyond the pillared multitude to catch a glimpse of the long funeral procession, hastening on to the place of graves. There is something melancholy, too, in the dull, heavy sound of the wheels sinking in the sandy road—the laboured tread of the weary horses—the protracted yawn of the drowsy driver.

“Wish we didn’t have to go this roundabout way home,” muttered Tom, trailing his long whip in the sand. “’Twould be a mighty short distance from the boat, if one could go straight across. I always did despise this road. ’Taint fit for a nigger to drive, any way you can fix it.”

“Tom,” said Mrs. Walton, “you had better drive faster; we shall not reach home before midnight, at this rate.”

“I tell you, missus,” replied Tom, “one of these horses is ailing. ’T’other one keep pull, pull, and he sneak all the

time behind. We got a mighty bad hill to go up, too, 'fore we see home."

"Let us get out and walk," said Linda, and Mrs. Walton, fearing for her sick horse, approved the proposition.

Even Linda's light footsteps were clogged by the sand, now heavy with the dews of night, and they dragged wearily along. She wished there was a moon, that friend of the traveller, to cheer them on the way, for nothing could be more dreary than the sound of the whippoorwill's voice wailing on the ear, or the solemn hootings of the owl, heard from the topmost boughs of the pines.

Tom at length came to a dead halt.

"Look here, missus," said he, "sure as you be born, this horse foundered. He drink, drink too much at the creek back; he won't go one step; he blow and puff like a windmill."

Mrs. Walton was struck with dismay. She knew by the laboured breathing of the horse that Tom's fears were not without foundation. But what was to be done? They had lanterns to the carriage; but she had forgotten to take matches, and there was no one near to whom she could apply for assistance.

"Hark!" exclaimed Linda; "I hear the sound of negroes singing not far off. I thought we could not be far from Mr. Marshall's plantation. See, here is a by-path leading to it."

"What of that?" uttered Mrs. Walton. "Tom cannot leave the horse in this condition. Linda, you must be the Jonah of our household, for you carry ill luck with you wherever you go. The first journey your father took you his finest horse was killed, and now my other best carriage-horse is going to die. If you had come with Robert, this would not have happened."

"I will go myself," she meekly answered, "and see if I can send some help to Tom. I am not afraid to go alone."

Away she ran, for the sand no longer obstructed her steps

in the by-path, and the singing, sounding louder and louder, guided her way. Soon she saw a torch-light glimmering through the trees, and she found herself near a large corn-crib, from which the choral strains were issuing. To one unaccustomed to such a spectacle, nothing could have been more picturesque than the scene that presented itself to Linda's eye. Large, pine torches were flaring near the door, and threw their red light on the black visages of about forty or fifty negroes, sitting in a ring round an immense pile of corn, on which was seated the sable master of the ceremonies, who was tossing the corn down to the group below, who seized it, one by one, with a yell of delight, and, squaring their elbows and shrugging their shoulders, they vied with each other in stripping off the dry husks from the golden ears. The African monarch of this harvest festival, as he threw the grain into the dexterous hands of the workmen, rolled out a volume of voice that shook the pine-boards of the crib, and every negro joined in the chorus with a vehemence and glee, a physical joy and strength, which none of the pale race can imitate—

“As I went out by the light of the moon,
Merrily singing this old tune,
I come across a big raccoon
A sotting on a rail,”

shouted the Agrarian king; and then the sable orchestra chimed bravely in—

“A sotting on a rail, a sotting on a rail—
I come across a big raccoon
A sotting on a rail.”

Then, as the spirit of melody waxed stronger, the master would vary his strains, and—

“As I went down to Shinbone alley,
Long time ago,
To buy a bonnet for my Sally,
Long time ago,”

echoed through the woods, in one full, deafening chorus, dying away only to be repeated with more Herculean vigour. There is nothing that bears the name of music, that can be compared to the negro's singing; he sings all over; every muscle quivers with melody; it gushes from every pore. The sounds seem to roll from the white of his eyes, as well as through his ivory teeth. His shoulders, elbows, knees, all appear instinct with song. He winks, he grins, stamps with his feet, taps with his heel, pats with his toes, raps with his knuckles—in short, gesticulates in every possible manner the human form admits. Oh! he is in his glory at a corn-shucking!

It was long before the sweet voice of Linda could be heard above the din. It was not till she stood within the door, like a fair spirit of light stealing on their darkness, that they checked their wild notes and listened to her accents. They all knew the young mistress of Pinegrove; but her unexpected appearance in the midst of their revels, looking so alabaster white in her black dress, with the crimson glare of their flambeaux streaming on her face, struck some of them with superstitious terror.

"It is a spirit!" whispered one, rolling his eyes slowly over his shoulder.

"Pshaw—it's Miss Lindy," cried another of bolder nerves, springing up and coming towards her through heaps of shucks and denuded grain. It was the husband of Judy, and he worshipped the very ground on which her young mistress trod.

"Lord bless her!" said he, peering at her from under his large hand, for the blaze dazzled his eyes; "how came Miss Lindy here this time o' night? Where she been?—where she going?—what for she all alone?"

Linda explained their situation as briefly as possible, and was immediately escorted back by several of the stoutest vas-

sals, with Judy's husband at their head. They found Tom in real and unaffected grief, "sorrowing over the expiring horse;" and Mrs. Walton bitterly murmuring at a misfortune she imputed to Linda's obstinacy and rebellion. Linda beheld, by the torches that the negroes brought, the poor creature stretched in his last agony, and the tears ran down her cheeks. She began to think there was some truth in her step-mother's remark that she was a Jonah, who brought misfortune in her train, and conscientiously assumed the loss of the Belle Creole, as well as the two noble horses sacrificed in her cause. She proposed, as the only alternative, their passing the night at Mr. Marshall's; but this Mrs. Walton positively refused, as she was determined on reaching home that night. Neither would she consent to borrowing his carriage; she did not like him, and would not be indebted to him for the slightest favour: she could ride home on the remaining horse; Linda could ride behind her, and they could thus reach home very conveniently. Notwithstanding her fatigue and regret, Linda could not help smiling, when, mounted behind her mother, whose waist, for the first time, her shrinking arm surrounded, with a tall negro stalking before, waving a blazing pine-knot above his head, she jogged along, with a blanket for a saddle, and Mrs. Walton's large work-basket, committed to her care, swinging from her left arm. She had taken off her own bonnet to see more clearly the windings of the way; but her step-mother's long, green veil kept sweeping before her eyes, and twisting its folds with her damp ringlets. It was the same path she had travelled alone, when a little child, to intercede for her faithful Judy. She looked back upon the past, and remembered that God had been merciful to her; she accused herself of ingratitude and distrust, when she thought of the dangers from which she had been delivered—the perils she had escaped. She passed the old log school-house, and thought how blessed she had been in the instruc-

tions of such a teacher as Aristides Longwood—so pure, so unworld-like, and so wise. Then, memory, wandering among the green avenues and oaken groves of Rose Bower, recalled the lessons of love there instilled into her young heart, and she lifted it up in gratitude to Heaven. She lingered in fancy by the early grave of the gentle Luta, and wondered why God had spared her life, when he had taken away one so sweet and lovely. She went back still farther into the twilight of the past, and dwelt on her wayward, exacting childhood, when left to her own wild will, before an arbitrary step-mother had ruled her with an iron rod.

“It is all right—it is just,” thought she, looking upward through the shadows of night. “I have murmured and repined when I ought to be glowing with gratitude and love to the Being who has strewed my path with blessings, even as he has sown yon heavens with stars. I will no longer struggle madly with my destiny. I will commit myself into his guardian hands, praying only to be guided by his Spirit and governed by his will. If he has reserved for me such a blissful lot as to be the wife of Roland ; if I am permitted to walk hand in hand with him through life, and mingle my soul with his in death, my heart shall be a living holocaust, where gratitude shall burn with everlasting incense. But, if he has otherwise ordained, let me be able to say, ‘Father, not my will, but thine be done.’”

With holy aspirations like these, the young heiress pursued her way, and, when she reached the old family gate, she could think with calmness of meeting Robert, though a few hours back the anticipation had filled her with fear and trembling.

“Hallo, hallo, Massa !” called out the torch-bearer, for the gate was locked and Bruno set up a magnificent growl. A tall figure darkened the doorway.

“Robert, Robert ! don’t come out in the night air !” cried his mother, but it was too late, he was already at the gate ; and when Linda sprang from the horse, he caught her in his arms

ere she reached the earth. She felt the tumultuous beatings of his heart, and her own began again to tremble with agitation.

"You are better, Robert. You are well," she cried, looking anxiously at his pale cheeks.

"Yes, perfectly well,—now you have come. But where's the carriage? What has happened? Mother, what does this mean?"

"You are very polite to let me get down by the block," said Mrs. Walton, stepping carefully to the ground, then eagerly seizing her son's hand and drawing him towards the house. "Make haste and come in. Don't stay in the dampness."

"I'm not sick, mother," said he, laughing and following her; but Linda felt the hand which still held hers, glowing with feverish heat, and when they stood together in the light of the room, she thought he looked thinner than when they parted. His countenance seemed softened. His long, black lashes cast a drooping shade over his eyes, and tempered their insufferable brilliancy. Linda, anxious to divert his mind from dwelling on their last meeting, gave an amusing description of their adventures, while she twisted her fingers in her shining hair, to restore its disordered ringlets.

"I don't think it's any thing to laugh at," cried Mrs. Walton, holding out her new crape bonnet, and exhibiting several sinking places in the pasteboard, from which the stiffening had departed. "I have lost my best horse, spoiled my new bonnet, and I have, no doubt, ruined my dress, riding on Tom's dirty blanket."

Linda looked round the familiar room, and the smile forsook her lips. Her eye rested on her father's vacant arm-chair, and, weeping, she *remembered her dead*.

"I never saw such a girl," said Mrs. Walton; "laughing one moment, and crying the next." She thought it best, how-

ever, not to accuse her before Robert of the death of the horse, suspecting she would find a champion in him.

And how did Linda feel, domesticated once more in her own native home—that home she had so much dreaded to see? Ah! she felt that it was home still,—the spot where she had first known life's mysterious vitality, childhood's wild exultance,—the place where a mother's smile had beamed, a mother's prayer ascended, a mother's grave was made,—a father's arms had caressed. It was still the focus of her most vivid associations, and though some of the rays were dim and darkened, they converged to their centre, obedient to nature's immutable laws. It was pleasant to feel the same breeze that had rocked the young birds of her native trees in their nests, fanning her cheek; to hear the boughs whispering lovingly in her ear as the wind glided through them, as they had done years ago; to be greeted on every side by glad, gleeful smiles, on the shining faces of her own negroes, and be patted again, as she crossed the threshold, by the large, velvet paws of their household guardian.

What a change did her return cause in the aspect of Pine Grove! There was beauty and gentleness, and light and music, where there had been gloom and silence and darkness. The apartments were once more redolent with flowers; the keys of the piano, resounding to the light touch of youthful fingers, responded to the sweet voice that warbled over them, and the birds, attracted by congenial strains, perched on the branches that shaded the windows, and joined in the chorus. The slaves, rejoicing in the beams of that lovely countenance—never turned towards them save in kindness and good-will—went cheerily to their daily tasks, vying with each other in administering to her wants. And what did Robert do? He lived, breathed but in her presence; sat by her when she played and sang; read to her when she sewed; walked with her when she walked: in short, was her shadow, wherever she

went. He seemed indeed the shadow of himself, so different was he from the fierce, imperious being she had so much feared. She began to think he had learned to love her as a brother, and her heart went forth to meet him with reviving confidence. Mrs. Walton, too, engrossed with her domestic affairs, left her unmolested; appearing perfectly satisfied, as she saw her with Robert, whose complexion gradually assumed a ruddier hue.

Thus several weeks glided by, leaving brightening roses on Linda's cheek and scattering down on her heart, when a letter from Emily made her utter an exclamation of joy. She hastily broke the seal, when another letter enclosed fell into her lap. Her heart told her whence it came, and burning blushes covered her face. The eyes of Robert were upon her—those unfathomable eyes, and she felt as if her secret was revealed. Before she had time to take it in her hand, he had caught it and gazed steadily on the superscription. A cloud, dark as night, gathered over his countenance.

"This is a bold, free hand," said he with bitterness; "traced, no doubt, by one who is more accustomed to grasp the oar than guide the pen."

"It is doubtless from Mr. Carleton," she was tempted to say, but the words died unuttered on her truthful lips. She had seen Roland's fine, vigorous handwriting, and recognised it at the first glance. Her hand trembled—her bosom panted. She longed to fly to some lone corner, where she could peruse it unseen. She dreaded the storm lowering on Robert's darkening brow. Sunshine on one side, shadow on the other; she stood irresolute, palpitating with mingled joy and fear.

"You are not candid, Linda; you are not true," cried Robert, in a husky voice. "You have been trifling with feelings you can never fathom."

"You are unjust and ungentleman-like, Robert," said she, moving to the door, her spirit roused, as it always was when

falsely accused. "I am not accountable to you for my correspondence, and I assure you I have established no clandestine one."

When she had left him, and recalled his dark, suffering countenance, she reproached herself for wounding a heart, with all its faults, only too devotedly her own. But Roland's letter was in her hand, and when, in the solitude of her chamber, her lightning glances flashed over the lines, then returned, and again retraced them with lingering tenderness,—she forgot Robert, her step-mother, every thing but him, with whose spirit her own mingled in every impassioned word. Roland wrote with a pen of fire, in language as free and fluent as the waves on which his bark was borne.

Young maiden, plighted bride, or wedded wife! Do you remember when the first letter, from him enshrined in your heart of hearts, met your gaze? Perhaps you sat in the soft shadow of muslin curtains as Linda did, and pressed the snowy folds against your crimson cheek, or mantled them over your quickened heart. Or perchance you were alone with nature, "that sacred bride of heaven, worthy of the passion of a god," and drank in her sacred influences with the love fountain that flowed in rushing streams through the virgin channels of your heart. Oh, beautiful as the first rose of spring, the first star of evening, the first golden tint of the dawn, is the first written memorial from the being one loves!

Roland spoke with confidence of the future. He saw it in the light of his own bright, bold spirit, and it spread it like the map of a new, luxuriant country; sunbeams lingering on the hill-tops, peace resting on the valleys, and freedom sporting on the blue, flowing streams. His soul expanded in the grander scenery by which he was surrounded. With the majestic Mississippi rolling beneath, the heavens themselves seemed to bend over him with a broader, more magnificent arch, and the wind unfurled its pinions with a stronger, ampler sweep. Ho

spoke with confidence of her love. Having once been assured of it from her own lips, he believed in it as fully and firmly as the truth of God. No doubts or suspicions sullied his faith or wounded her fidelity. It was the polar star of his life, shining with pure, unchanging lustre, to which his heart would turn with magnetic sympathy, even to its last vibration.

“Missus want to know if Miss Linda ever coming to dinner,” said Nelly, putting her broad face in at the door.

Linda started,—she had forgotten the flight of time, and hastily putting away her letters, she followed Nelly, with ill-concealed trepidation, into the dining-room. Robert was not there, but she was introduced to a stranger by the name of McCleod, a gentleman of Scotch descent, who occupied the place of Aristides in the log school-house, and had come to board a while in Mrs. Walton’s family. Feeling the absence of Robert an unspeakable relief, she welcomed the singular-visaged stranger with an involuntary smile, which was returned with usury.

Mr. McCleod was considerably past the heyday of youth, but he had that evergreen appearance which made it exceedingly doubtful what his age might be. He had a wide, irregular mouth, with very white, uneven teeth, which he displayed liberally when he laughed—not only the teeth, but the gums, which were of an unusually vivid red. His hair, too, was of a deep, unadulterated red, coarse and frizzled; standing in rebellious tufts, thick as peonies, all over his head. There was a slight obliquity in his small, black eyes, that gave his countenance an expression of extreme cunning and shrewdness, a quaint, old-fashioned, twinkling look, that harmonized admirably with the brogue of his glib-rolling tongue. Ugly, sensible, comical, strange, were the epithets suggested to Linda, by the appearance of the Scotch schoolmaster. She could not help smiling every time she met the odd twinkle of his

eye, which was rather frequent, for he seemed to find her, as Aristides did, a "beautiful study,"—laying down his knife and fork, and rubbing his hands energetically, while he gazed upon her.

"A very nice young lady, very nice indeed," said he, continuing the friction of his broad palms. "Done with school, I suppose. Learning housewifery from her excellent mother, the best part of education. Excellent pudding, this, Mrs. Walton—excellent. I dare say the young lady's delicate fingers assisted in forming this delightful union of the acid and sweet. Not at all strange, that the sweet should preponderate, not at all—he! he!"

He had a way of repeating his words at the end of each sentence, and at the close a kind of inward chuckle expressed his own approbation of his remarks.

"I cannot pride myself much on my culinary accomplishments," replied Linda, "though I intend to be an assiduous pupil in that department."

"That's right," said Mr. McCleod, approvingly. "The art of cookery has degenerated in modern times. The Romans excelled in this divine science, and some of their most elegant scholars were the most accomplished gastronomists. My friend Mrs. Walton excels most ladies in this neglected branch of female education. She understands the exact proportions of things, she does—the art of composition, and I think I excel in that of decomposition. I think I do. Ha! ha!"

It was very evident that the Scotchman was a favourite with Mrs. Walton, a very rare thing. Perhaps it was because he treated her with unusual deference, praised her household virtues and accomplishments, had an ecstasie way of listening when she spoke, always jumped to the door, and held it as she passed through, and, above all, never contradicted her. It is true he exhibited these courtesies in a still more enthusiastic manner to Linda, but she had been the first object of these

respectful attentions, and the first impression, usually so indelible, was made.

Linda rejoiced in this addition to the family trio, as it would break in on those too close-knit *tête-à-têtes* with Robert, which she tried in vain to avoid. She expected, too, to derive great amusement from his oddities, as well as instruction from his classic lore.

Supper passed, and still Robert came not. Mrs. Walton grew anxious and restless. He had gone out hunting, and she could not account for his long stay. Some accident must have happened. He would take cold, get sick, a thousand misfortunes might occur. In vain the Scotchman praised her rolls, "uncommonly nice rolls;" her muffins, "unspeakably light muffins." She heeded not: for one single chord, that vibrated to the touch of feeling, was awake. At length he returned, looking gloomy and weary, refused to eat any supper, and passed almost immediately to his own room.

"What can be the matter with Robert?" said his mother, casting a sinister glance at Linda. "He appeared well and in good spirits this morning."

Linda made no answer to this indirect question, but her heightened colour and downcast eye were ~~not~~ unnoticed by Mrs. Walton.

"Your son has a variable temperament," remarked Mr. McCleod. "The accompaniment of genius, madam. Look at his eye. Too bright not to be clouded sometimes; entirely too bright. Now I am not subject to these changes in the least. Observe my eyes—neither too bright nor too dim. Just the right medium, is it not so, young lady, the right medium? Ha! ha!"

He turned his eyes with such an irresistibly ludicrous squint that Linda laughed outright, and Mrs. Walton was obliged to forgive his want of sympathy, in consequence of his admiration for her son's genius and brilliant eyes. She

followed her son to his room, but found his door locked. "Robert, what is the matter? Open the door and tell me."

Robert opened the door, but held it so that his mother could not enter. "I wish you would not disturb me, mother. I am not sick. I only wish to be alone. I am not a baby or child, that I must be called to account if I choose to go to bed without a supper."

"But tell me, Robert, if that girl, Linda, isn't at the bottom of this? If she is, I'll not yield to your desire for delay any longer. I'll bring matters to a crisis at once."

"Let me be, to-night, if you would not drive me to distraction," exclaimed Robert, impatiently, "and for heaven's sake let Linda rest. Leave this matter to ourselves, whatever it may be. You cannot remedy it." Shutting the door and again locking it, he thus effectually precluded all further conversation, and Mrs. Walton retired to her own room, to meditate on her future plans.

Linda felt very unhappy at the change in Robert, for it convinced her that his passions existed in all their strength, and while she dreamed they had gradually died, they were only in a state of quiescence, perhaps acquiring new power from their transient repose. Her own conscience was not free from reproach. Had she been indeed true to the promise given? Was she not bound heart and soul to another, though plighted by no betrothal vow? Was she acting openly and uprightly, in concealing from him that she had given her happiness into the keeping of another? No, she would tell him all. She would throw herself upon his generosity, and appeal to him to shield her from his mother's persecutions.

To resolve, with one of her ardent and impulsive nature, was to act. Instead of avoiding him, she lingered near his side, and sought the renewal of that gentle intercourse which had been like balm to her harassed spirits, for the several past weeks. She could not help trembling however, when the

propitious moment arrived; for the happiness or misery of her future life depended on the result of this interview. If he were magnanimous enough to relinquish his claims as a lover, and stand between her and an exasperated mother,—instead of uniting with her in a pursuit so harrowing and ineffectual,—there might yet be joy in store for her.

“Are we now no longer friends, Robert?” said she, running her fingers softly over the keys of the piano, by which she was seated.

“It is for yourself to decide, Linda,” he replied gloomily. “I have borne from you coldness, dislike, disdain, but I can not bear deceit.”

“Listen, Robert, while I lay bare my whole heart. I will be sincere, and then, though you may withdraw your friendship, you cannot withhold your esteem.”

“Stop one moment,” said he, snatching her hand, and fixing on her a glance penetrating as steel. “I fear I cannot bear it. Don’t tell me you love another. I fear it. I dread it, but I don’t *know* it yet. Let me still doubt, still hope, but do not drive me to despair.”

“Alas! I feared this violence, and yet your late gentleness and calmness encouraged me to believe you were changed.”

“I have been trying to subdue my fierce nature; and when you smile kindly on me, Linda, the tiger is really transformed into the lamb. You might lead me through life with one silken hair. I thought you were softening, pitying, almost loving. I thought—but that letter—yes! tell me all, any thing is better than suspense. Despair itself is better than the agony of doubt and fear. Speak, and see how calmly I will listen.”

“Calmly,” thought Linda, observing the hectic spot that burned on his cheeks, and the trembling hand on which his forehead leaned. She dreaded the consequences of her avowal, remembering the fearful scene she had witnessed at

Mobile, but he urged her with such vehemence to proceed, to tell him every thing, without any concealment or reservation, that she at length began, and told him all. But while she declared the strength of her love, she told him at the same time of her solemn determination never to marry with the conviction that his happiness would be sacrificed by the act. She paused breathless from agitation, gazing on the face of her auditor. He moved not during her recital, only his head drooped lower on his hand, and the flush on his cheek spread over his brow and temples.

“Speak, Robert, and tell me you forgive the anguish I have unwittingly made you suffer. Could I have commanded my affections, they should have been yours.”

“And mine they shall yet be, by heaven!” he exclaimed, starting up, his flushed cheek changing to a livid hue. “I might yield you to an equal, but never shall it be said that a low pilot has triumphed over me. What business has he, from the mere accident of preserving your life, to presume upon your love? A Newfoundland dog would have done as much; and you—I cannot believe such infatuation—you are mocking me; you dare not tell me a second time that you reject Robert Graham”—here he raised himself proudly to his full, stately height—“for that pitiful scoundrel, Roland Lee.”

The fire literally blazed from his eyes. He ground his heel in the dust. Linda was terrified, and fled towards the door as from a lion springing from his lair; but, pursuing her, and seizing both hands, he forced her to remain.

“You shall not leave me!” he cried; “you have made me a madman, and you shall listen to my ravings. How could you sit down in cold blood and tell me that tale? Why did you not deceive me a little longer? It is true, I accused you of this; but I believed it as little as that the azure of heaven would mingle with the mire it shines upon. Fool that I am, so resist my mother as I have done! I would not let her

force you. I wanted to win your love and gratitude by gentleness and fond, tender cares. I would not enter into her violent measures ; but it is all over now. Linda, you shall be mine, as sure as there is a God above—mine, if you will, in peace—but still for ever mine.”

“In that God whom you blasphemously invoke I put my trust,” replied Linda, looking upward, with heavenly calmness.

The frenzy of his passion now beat against her in vain. The name of God, so boldly uttered, had the effect of a miracle. It was as if she had heard that divine voice which fell like oil upon the troubled waves, and smoothed them into rest. She struggled no more ; she attempted not to release her hands, though his grasp felt like burning iron on her wrists.

“Go,” said he, gradually relaxing his desperate hold ; “go and triumph in my agonies. Laugh, when you think of the madman’s antics, and thank heaven that your veins are filled with ice, instead of molten lead.”

“Oh ! Robert, I dare not leave you in this terrible mood. Do not give way to such maddening passions.”

“Did I make myself?” cried he, fiercely. “Did I pour this boiling fluid in my heart, and bid it rush, as it now does, in burning torrents to my brain ? Away !—you might as well tell the billows not to rise when the winds lash them to foam.”

“I would willingly die to give you peace, Robert.”

“Leave me, then ; I must be alone.”

As Linda softly closed the door, after bending on him one more tearful, pitying glance, he staggered back into a chair and covered his face with his handkerchief. The blood gushed from his nose and mouth, and for a few moments he sunk in partial insensibility. Still he was conscious of his situation ; and, as soon as the mist melted from his sight, he rose and supported himself against the back of a chair.

“It is a trifle,” said he ; but his voice sounded faint and

hollow. "It will save me a doctor's fee for blood-letting."

Then slowly approaching the fire, for the late autumnal winds were blowing and the cheering blaze illumined the chimney, he threw in the bloody handkerchief, and took up another which lay upon the table. It was Linda's. A faint, exquisite perfume breathed from it, as he held it to his lips. He looked at it—no stain of blood was left.

"It would be a shame," he murmured, "to soil this delicate tissue with such dark fluid. I'll wear it in my bosom, and see if it will ease its aching throbs."

With a deep sigh, he took up his lamp, passed into the dining-room, approached the sideboard, and, diluting a quantity of salt with water, eagerly swallowed it.

"My mother will never know of this," repeated he, as he sought his chamber and threw himself, undressed, upon his bed. "She would plague me to death about the night-air. Pshaw! I am glad I have safety-valves in my veins to let off some of my superfluous blood."

With feverish pulse and throbbing temples, this victim of early-indulged and undisciplined passions tossed on his restless couch during the silent watches of the night. Love, hatred, revenge, and jealousy, fused in the burning forge of his heart, and mingling in hideous compound, assumed the wildest and most appalling forms. He had been dreaming that Linda was, leaf by leaf and flower by flower, slowly but surely twining her affections round him, from the time he had parted from her at Mrs. Carleton's to the moment when the thunderbolt of truth awakened him, scorching and withering the garland his own fancy had woven.

Every one at the breakfast table was struck by his pale and haggard countenance. Linda, who knew not the physical suffering he had endured, and imputed it entirely to mental anguish, felt too wretched to eat or speak, though Mr. M'Cleod

obsequiously urged her to do both. Indeed, he seemed the only one disposed to do justice to "Mrs. Walton's very excellent breakfast," and generously exerted himself to make up for the deficiencies of others.

"I feel sorry for that young man," said he to Linda, the first time he met her alone. "I know well where his disease is seated. Ah! young lady, I see you are a dangerous person—very dangerous person. If I were young, I would not like to run the risk myself. You must not be angry with me, for I am a plain, blunt man—I am. If you cannot love him, you ought not to be in the same house with him. Why, it is killing him by inches. It seems very foolish in an old bachelor to give advice on such a subject—very foolish indeed; but the bystander always sees better than the actors—he does; ha, ha!"

It was strange, and Linda could not account for it; but there was something about this man that inspired confidence and disarmed displeasure. She felt the truth of his remarks, and involuntarily exclaimed—

"Oh! that I indeed had another home than this!"

"There is one piece of advice, young lady, permit me to give. You are very young and inexperienced, and I presume know little about matters of business. You will be summoned into court to choose a guardian, your father being deceased. Mrs. Walton, your excellent step-mother, will tell you to fix your choice on her—she will; but, though I have the highest regard for the lady, I think it will be much more judicious in you to select a male friend. Ladies are not always as clear-headed as gentlemen, you know—not always as clear-headed—ha, ha! Besides," continued he, "if you should wish to command any of your property before you became of age, Mrs. Walton might not think it proper to allow it; very prudent lady Mrs. Walton is—very prudent, indeed."

Linda, who, indeed, knew nothing about the forms of busi-

ness, and would have blindly followed Mrs. Walton's directions, had it not been for the hint of the shrewd Scotchman; thanked him for his counsel, and decided in her own mind that she would choose Mr. Marshall, her father's best friend.

Mrs. Walton invited her to ride with her, as if pleasure was her sole object, and it was not till they were within a short distance from the court-house, that she explained the motive that brought her.

"It is proper that you should choose a guardian," said she. "I brought you merely for form's sake, as I intend to assume the responsibility myself. All you will have to do is to signify your choice. Of course, every one knows that I am your natural guardian, and the law only gives new sanction to my authority."

Linda made no reply. To dispute this authority would only expose her to a scene of violence, and she did not wish to appear in the presence of strangers disturbed and excited.

The entrance of a young and beautiful girl,—the reputed heiress of a large fortune and the destined bride of her step-brother, for Mrs. Walton had circulated this report far and wide, was not likely to pass unnoticed. At first she was pale from trepidation, but the eager glances directed towards her from every side brought the vanishing roses back to her cheeks, with added bloom. She looked, indeed, by the side of her step-mother, like a sweet rose-bud springing up by a seeded dandelion. Among the many strange faces around her, she recognised the friendly countenance of Mr. Marshall, and it reassured her. When the judge, with great urbanity of manner, addressed to her the usual questions, and with modest firmness she pronounced the name of Mr. Marshall, her step-mother uttered an involuntary exclamation, and gave her a withering glance.

"Allow her to correct herself, sir," said she, hastily; "she

is embarrassed, and knows not what she says." Then addressing Linda in a low voice, "Recall that, on your peril."

"The young lady has the privilege of choosing for herself, if she is past fourteen," said the judge, mildly, but decidedly.

"It was her father's wish if he should die and leave her an orphan, that I should assume the office of guardian," affirmed Mrs. Walton, with the confidence of truth.

"The young lady must choose for herself," reiterated the judge.

Mrs. Walton's character was so well known throughout the county, and rumours of her oppressive treatment of her lovely step-daughter so prevalent, that the most eager interest was manifested in the auditors. The name of her father thrilled the heart of Linda. Was it indeed his wish? She knew Mrs. Walton harsh, severe, and unkind, but she had never detected her in a falsehood. She was aware of the exalted opinion her father had of her powers of management, and she thought it more than probable it had been his will. That sacred reverence which one cherishes for the wishes of the dead subdued the excitement of her feelings.

"Was it indeed my father's expressed desire, that you should be elected as guardian, in preference of all others?" she asked, in a low voice, of her step-mother.

"I am not in the habit of uttering falsehoods," she indignantly replied.

"In obedience then to my father's will, sir," said Linda, mournfully turning to the judge, the rich colour fading from her cheek, "I choose my step-mother as my guardian."

Deep disappointment was visible on the countenances of the audience. Even a murmur of disapprobation was heard, but Mrs. Walton, with a triumphant look, turned to depart. Mr. Marshall, whose benevolent heart bled for the trials which the daughter of his friend was doomed to pass through, led

her to the carriage. He grieved for the decision she had made, though he respected the motive.

Poor Linda! behold her seated in the carriage opposite that vinegar face, looking down that she may not see the storm she knows is about to roll in thunder over her head. She had yielded, it is true, but then she had at first dared to oppose her, in public too. Besides this, there were long arrears to settle, and the day of reckoning was come. Robert had told his mother of Linda's disgraceful confession, and she had only waited till the scene in the court might be over, to pour upon her the torrent of her indignation.

And what a torrent it was! Linda remained still and impassive—a pearl beneath the wrathful billows. But all at once she roused, and lightnings flashed from her eyes. Roland a mean wretch, a low adventurer, a base fortune-hunter. No!—she could not hear such expressions without an indignant vindication. Never before had she spoken with such dignity and warmth. She cared not for the invectives that were showered upon her. The majesty of virtuous affection sustained her, and she did not fear.

“Very well,” said the step-mother, with a curdling smile; “I know how to save my family from disgrace. Before a week has passed over your head, you shall be the wife of Robert; unworthy as you are of such a blessed lot.”

“Never, never!” exclaimed Linda: “you may chain me, force me, imprison me, if you will, but you cannot compel my lips to utter vows so false.”

“There is no need of your uttering them. The justice will do all the talking,” replied she, with a sneer.

Linda did not reply, and Mrs. Walton believed she had won the victory; but could she have penetrated the thoughts of her step-daughter, she would have cherished no such flattering delusion. All the energies of her spirit were roused, but she resolved no longer to waste them in words.

The family seamstress entered her room with folds of shining white satin suspended from her arm.

"Miss Lindy will please let me measure her," said she, with a delighted smile.

"Your labour will be lost," answered Linda, quietly. "I never will wear the dress."

"Missus say I must make it right off,—quick as I can."

"Well, obey her," said Linda; "do your duty, and I will do mine."

"Oh, Miss Lindy look so sweet when she get on this fine dress. Massa Robert, too, so handsome!" continued the seamstress, passing the rich folds through her sable fingers. Linda seemed to have adopted a system of non-resistance, for she sat passive as a statue, while the bridal robe was fitted to her youthful form. She scarcely seemed to notice the operation that was going on, so abstracted was her eye, so marble was her cheek.

The room which she occupied was in the wing of the house, opposite Mrs. Walton's. It was in the second story, and opened into a piazza that extended the whole length of the building. It was shaded by large hickory trees, whose branches, shooting out too luxuriantly and sweeping against the railing of the piazza, had been lopped off, while the trunks seemed to mingle with the columns of the portico, relieving their whiteness by their brown hue. Long after the family was asleep, Linda, regardless of the chilly night air, had wandered in this piazza, trying to mature some plan of escape from the persecution of her household. She could take refuge with Mr. Marshall, but her step-mother would pursue her there, unless she was guarded by bars of brass and triple steel. Even should she fly to Emily, her enemy would take the wings of the morning and baffle her flight. Rose Bower would be no refuge, for her residence could remain no secret in that youthful community. Her mother had a cousin resid

ing near her own plantation in Louisiana, and who had the supervision of her property. Could she be placed under his protection, she would be secure, at least for a while. While absorbed in these meditations, she was startled by the rustling of the leaves of the tree near which she stood. A voice whispered from the boughs,

“Let not the young lady be alarmed. It is a friend, anxious for her welfare,—it is. Please extinguish the light in your room, so that its reflection may not fall upon the piazza, and then approach as near as possible to avoid the danger of being overheard. We must be very discreet,—very discreet, indeed we must.”

Linda recognised the voice of the Scotchman, and a wild hope sprang up in her heart. Had Providence sent him to assist her in her hour of need? Eagerly obeying his directions, she waited in trembling expectation to learn the object of his coming.

“A strange bird has lighted on your tree, my dear young lady, but I trust you will not find it one of ill omen. I could not speak with you alone this evening, and this was the only means of communication left. My heart bleeds for you,—so young, innocent, and unprotected. I cannot bear to see you sacrificed,—I cannot. I impugn not the motives of your excellent step-mother. I do not wish to judge any one, but your aversion to this marriage is so uncommon, so very uncommon, I would gladly save you from it.”

“Oh, Mr. McCleod, how is that possible?—tell me, and I will bless you.”

“Hush, Miss Linda, not quite so loud, if you please. We must be wary, very wary indeed. Now, you know, I am not a young man,—you see I am an ugly one, and believe me an honest one. Name the place to which you wish to escape, and I will be your guardian and guide, I will. You can trust me as if I were your father; young lady, you can.”

"How kind, how good!" exclaimed Linda: "but your school. It will be impossible to leave it. Alas! it cannot be."

"I will obtain permission of Mr. Marshall, who is my chief patron, to dismiss it for a short time. It is an excellent thing to give occasional recreation to children,—excellent. No difficulty on this point, young lady, no difficulty at all."

Thus reassured, Linda told him the various plans that had been suggested to herself, and her desire to go to Louisiana, in preference to any other place. He seemed to have arranged every thing already for that purpose. A fleet horse would bear them to the landing, where boats, constantly running, could transport them to any spot on the rivers of the southwest. To elude observation, they must start in the darkness of night, as soon as sleep and silence favoured their flight.

"Then let it be to-morrow," exclaimed Linda. "I cannot live and deceive. I shall betray my purpose if I linger. Let every thing be in readiness. I have no words to thank you, but half my fortune will be insufficient to prove my gratitude."

"Do not speak of it, young lady. The satisfaction of relieving you from your present very unpleasant situation, will be the only reward I ask, indeed it will. The young gentleman and his excellent mother will be angry; but if the young lady is pleased, that is sufficient,—quite sufficient,—ha, ha!"

When Linda heard the inward chuckle, and saw the dim outline of the fiery head faintly burning through the cloudy night, she shivered at the thought of committing herself to his protection in the loneliness of darkness. Still, the respectability of his character, his disinterested kindness, his superior age, were guarantees for her safety, and death itself was preferable to the doom that awaited her at home. Could she sleep after that strange interview? No,—rekindling her lamp, she passed the remainder of the night in writing. She

wrote to Emily a brief but entire history of all that had occurred since their parting. She wrote to Roland, but spoke not of her sufferings or intended flight. Once arrived at a port of safety, she would apprise him of her residence and the motives that guided her actions, but she would not cause fruitless pain by dwelling on sorrows he could not relieve. Her last task was to address Mr. Marshall, and leave with him the story of her justification. Was it indeed her last? She thought of Robert, and the pen trembled in her hand. His wild despair, his frantic rage, when aware of her departure, would it not unthrone his reason? Filled with pity, and even tortured by remorse at the agony she was about to inflict, she addressed him in words of thrilling eloquence, while the scalding tears that blistered her paper bore evidence that it was the eloquence of the heart. She wrote with the solemnity, the tenderness and truth of a last farewell; and if ever the human heart was laid bare, in all its purity, singleness, innocence, and sensibility, it was on those tear-blotted pages, which were destined never to leave the bosom of the unhappy youth to whom they were addressed.

“Oh! what an odious task is mine!” thought she, when, by the morning light, she reviewed the past, and contemplated the future. “But am I not driven to it? Is there any alternative left? I’m living in sin and strife, in an atmosphere of passion, withering to my soul’s life. I’m becoming a creature of wild impulses, which might urge me on to deeds of madness and crime. My Father who art in heaven, forgive me, if I am led into wrong.”

Robert, in whose breast conscience and passion held fearful warfare, avoided being alone with Linda, dreading her too just reproaches. Mrs. Walton, exulting in the successful mastery she had obtained over the will of her rebellious step-daughter, was unusually gracious. She even filled her purse to overflowing, a boon as unexpected as it was welcome, though

received by Linda with blushes of conscious guilt. She thus found herself supplied with ample means to defray the expenses of her own journey, as well as her companion's. Mrs. Walton was in a munificent mood. Even to her, Linda's feelings softened in the prospect of leaving her for ever. When she rose to seek her chamber at night, and thought it might be the last time she might ever look upon his face again, that face so eminently handsome, in spite of the dark passions that defaced its brightness, she turned toward Robert with sad and tearful eyes. It was the first time since their last meeting alone, that she had voluntarily sought his glance. It had upon him the effect of electricity. "Linda," said he, drawing near her, and taking her hand, with unaccustomed gentleness; then, bending down, he added in a low voice, "Forgive me, if I have made you unhappy, but if an eternity of love and devotion can atone for the past, my life shall be one long act of expiation."

"Oh, Robert, I forgive you," said she, drooping her head on his shoulder, to hide her gushing tears; "but the time may come when you will never forgive yourself."

Robert was unutterably affected by her manner. He had been struggling with his conscience, and smarting from its goads, and those solemn, gentle words unmanned him. Tears gathered into his haughty eyes, and fell hot and fast on her pale, fair cheek, like those large, splashing drops that fall from the thunder-cloud, when the dry, sultry earth seems to repel the moisture.

"I cannot bear this," she faltered, almost fainting from agitation. "God bless you, Robert," and breaking from the arms that sought to detain her, she ran up stairs, and throwing herself on her knees by the bed-side, wept as if her heart would break. She was tempted to remain and sacrifice her happiness for his. She accused herself of selfishness, duplicity, and cruelty. She loathed the idea of the twinkling-eyed

Scotchman, with his chuckles and ha, ha's. "No—I cannot go. Better to stay and die."

The door softly opened, and Aunt Judy inserted her white turret through the aperture. "Bless her little heart," she cried, carefully shutting the door, and approaching her weeping darling. "What is the matter? Old Judy steal away a little while, just to get a peep at the wedding finery. Folks tell her, Miss Linda love Massa Robert now, and willing to let old new missus have her way. Bless the Lord, if it be so—honey, but if it ben't, don't act out a lie. You will be sorry for it, all your born days."

"Oh, Aunt Judy, I am so unhappy;" and throwing her arms across the faithful creature's lap, she sobbed like a wearied child.

"Lackaday, what shall I do for her?" cried Judy, smoothing her young mistress' beautiful brown tresses with her labour-hardened hand. "What would poor dear dead mistress say, if she live to see this day? Don't marry Massa Robert, if you no love him, honey. He too fierce, too headstrong. He make you all the time live in a storm. Nigger no business tell white folks what to do, but she feel what right in her heart. She know it's sin to stand up 'fore God, and swear to love all the days of her life, when she no love one bit."

Linda rose up, strengthened in her purpose by the true words of the faithful African.

"You are right, Judy," said she, bathing her burning eyes, to clear away the blinding mist. "I will not commit this sin. If God sends me a way of escape, I will not let it go. Here, take this letter to your master, and bless him for all his kindness. And pray, Judy, that the time will soon come, when I can give you a home on the banks of the Mississippi, where I can repay you in your latter days for all your love and fidelity to my orphan childhood. Here—take this and this," pressing silver tokens of remembrance in her ebony

hand, "good and faithful friend, and if you hear any one speak harshly of your young mistress, tell them—but no matter. Go, now, Judy, I would be alone."

"Oh, Miss Linda," sobbed the weeping slave, "it break my heart to hear you talk so solemn. Oh, it was an awful day, when good Massa Walton brought that white-eyed woman and her big saucy boy into this house. I always thought it a judgment on him."

"Hush, Judy, if you love me—and go. I must be alone." With lingering tenderness, Judy looked back upon the young face, which was to her the image of all that was sweet and lovely on earth, and of all that she dreamed of the angels of light. Linda felt as if forsaken by her last friend, but she struggled with her emotions, and tried to arm herself with fortitude and resolution. Her little bundle was prepared, the letter to Robert placed in a conspicuous position on the mantelpiece, her shawl ready to wrap around her, and she was counting the moments by the loud beatings of her heart. All became still as the grave, and she knew that the hour was come. She was to meet McCleod in the grove adjoining the yard, where he would be waiting in the shadow of the trees.

"Oh!" she sighed, "when, years ago, I went out in darkness and stealth, it was to plead for another, and I was strong. But for myself, I am now forsaking home, and braving unknown perils. Alas! how weak I am." Slowly and noiselessly she glided down the same back stair-way, and came forth under the shadow of night. The light of a partially clouded moon favoured her fugitive steps. She knew now there was no necessity of appeasing the Cerberus with biscuits, when a whisper of her soft, recognised voice would check his fiercest growl. She paused and trembled, thinking she heard footsteps approaching, but it was only the echo of her own. With the cold dew of fear gathering on her brow, she hastened onward to the spot where McCleod stood, holding

by the bridle the impatient horse, who was pawing the ground and champing his bit, indicative of his haste to depart.

"Wait a moment," cried she, putting her hand distractedly to her head. "I am so dizzy. I shall fall if I attempt to ride."

"Let not the young lady be alarmed," replied McCleod, in a soothing voice. "The horse is perfectly gentle, and she may rely on my protection implicitly—she may. I have learned that a boat will certainly be at the landing by morning, and if we make no delay, we shall reach there in time. Don't be cast down, Miss Lindy. There is no cause, indeed, there is none."

"Well, God bless you, sir, as you are faithful to the trust reposed in you." She is up—she is gone—swiftly she is borne through the dark pine-woods. She has lost the ghost-like gleam of her mother's white marble tomb-stone, the last glimpse of the paternal roof. Her heart feels like a stone in her bosom, so heavy—so cold—so sinking. Every once and a while, the Scotchman turns and whispers words of cheer and comfort, and she tries to be grateful, and to check the shuddering sensation that runs, like an ague fit, through her limbs. Oh ! how long seem the hours of that night to her excited imagination ! how chilling the gray light of approaching dawn ! At length she has reached the landing. Faint and exhausted, she is lifted from the horse and placed under a spreading tree. McCleod looks anxiously up the stream, watching for the dark wreath that crowns the steam-borne bark. Hark ! a sullen, plunging sound is heard. A cloud, heavier than the gray of morning, sweeps along the sky. The agitated river curls in waves against the banks, as the boat comes nearer and nearer ; and the steam rushes howling through its iron veins. Linda is on board. Safe from present pursuit, she sinks upon a couch, and, worn out by two sleepless, harrowing nights, falls into deep, protracted slumbers.

When she awoke, and felt the cool breeze of the river blowing on her cheek, and heard the lulling sound of the water dashing against the shore, she started, and leaned on her elbow with bewildered air. She passed her hand over her eyes to clear her vision, and see if the banks were indeed there, apparently scudding so swiftly by. Then a glad sense of freedom, of relief from persecution, and hope of future joy—a radiant vision of Roland Lee—came rushing and beaming over her. She rose refreshed and cheered, bathed her face, arranged her disordered dress, and restored to smoothness and beauty her tangled locks. A glow, like the dawning of morning, mantled her cheek. One could hardly have recognised, in her brightened countenance, the pale, trembling, weeping fugitive of the preceding night. Then despair reigned, but hope now claimed the empire of her heart. When McCleod met her on deck, he rubbed his hands with rapture.

“How charmingly you look, Miss Linda!” he exclaimed “I told you, you had nothing to fear—nothing. Every thing favours us: a fine, fast-sailing boat, one of the best on the river—the very best; and just to think of its meeting us the very moment we had arrived—the very moment! We shall have a fine moon to-night—we shall. I never felt so happy in my life, young lady. I feel sorry for the young man and his excellent mother; but I feel very happy myself—I do—ha, ha!”

“Never, never, can I repay your disinterested kindness,” cried Linda; “but there’s one in heaven who will,” added she, looking upward with one of those lovely expressions peculiar to her dark hazel eyes.

The Scotchman turned aside his head, and passed his handkerchief over his face.

“Do not speak of it,” said he, as if oppressed by her gra-

titude ; "it is not worth mentioning. I am more than repaid already—I am."

When Linda first entered the boat, she felt it an unspeakable relief that there were no other female passengers, with curious eyes and inquisitive lips, to embarrass and annoy her. But when night came on, a feeling of indescribable loneliness oppressed her, combined with the remembrance of those terrible scenes of which that river, over which they were now peacefully gliding, was the theatre, and herself a suffering actor. She leaned over the railing, and watched the glitter of the moonlight on the rippling waves, so bright, so dazzling, so intense, the reflected beams seemed to mock the paler glory of the heavens. Gradually a soft, translucent mist rose, like a silver exhalation from the bosom of the water, and floated in gauzy wreaths along the shore. Seen through this mellowing haze, the landscape beyond assumed the indistinctness and loveliness of fairy land, and, as the vapory curtain lifted higher and higher its diaphanous folds, the moon smiled through the veil of fleecy whiteness with pale and nun-like beauty.

"A very sweet night it is," said the voice of the Scotchman ; "but I fear the fog will become so thick we shall have to stop sailing till morning."

"Oh, I hope not," cried Linda, painfully awakened to the realities of her situation ; "it would be dreadful. Another boat might overtake us, and my flight be discovered."

"If we are able to sail about twelve miles farther, all will be well," repeated McCleod, as if talking to himself ; then, taking Linda's hand and drawing it through his arm, "Let us walk the deck awhile, if you are not disposed to sleep. Every thing is so still, it seems as if we were alone in the world—it does."

Linda sighed. She could not bear the proximity of this man, to whom she was under such unutterable obligations,

and she hated herself for her ingratitude. To excuse herself for withdrawing her arm from his, she proposed sitting on deck, and the obliging Scotchman brought out chairs and placed them side by side. When, however, he seated himself so near, that he placed his arm over the back of her chair, she wished she had continued her promenade, finding motion to her restless mind preferable to repose.

"Miss Linda," said McCleod, "how would you like to rest a while in a lonely spot, not very far from here, in perfect quiet and seclusion? There would be no danger of your being discovered by your friends—none in the world. Very few know of its locality—very few, indeed. You can remain there as long as you please, and no one shall molest you or make you afraid—they shall not."

"No, no," cried Linda, "I do not want rest; I dread it till I reach my destination. Once with my mother's relatives, I shall feel safe, and only then."

"Are you not safe with me, my dear young lady? Not one of your relatives can regard you with deeper interest than I do—not one."

"You are very kind; but I sigh for a home—a shelter from persecution and violence,—such as I shall find with my mother's kindred."

"I will furnish you a home, young lady, where persecution and violence shall never reach you, and where I will protect you with the fondest care—I will."

"Where do your mother and sisters live?" asked Linda, wondering she had never heard him speak of his quiet, happy home before.

"I have no mother or sisters," replied he, rubbing his hands softly together, while his eyes twinkled like meteors through the thickening mist. "I am a lone man, a very lone man—I am. I have long been thinking of taking unto myself a wife; but never saw one of woman-kind that pleased

my fancy—I never did—until—until”—he stammered; and, again passing his arm over the back of her chair, let his hand fall gently on her shoulder——

“Until when?” cried she, starting up in inexplicable emotion.

“Till I saw you, my dear young lady, looking so sweet and beautiful, and smiling so lovely, at the table of your excellent step-mother. Yes, I loved you,” he exclaimed, gathering assurance now the astounding declaration was made—“I did; and, seeing with great delight your aversion to Robert, I brought you away to marry you myself—to marry you myself—ha, ha!”

Linda stood as if transfixed by a bolt from heaven; but, when the traitor dared to put his arms round her, she shook him off with the strength of a young lioness.

“Touch me not on your life,” she cried; “come not near me, or, by heaven, I’ll plunge headlong into the river rolling beneath.”

“Come, Miss Linda, don’t be so violent,” said he, in a soft, wheedling tone. “You mustn’t be so hard to please—you mustn’t. Perhaps I am not as handsome as Robert; but I can take excellent care of your property—I can; and, as for loving you, there are not words enough in the English language to express half the love I bear you—there is not. Don’t be frightened—don’t be afraid of me—I’ll make you a thousand times better, more constant husband than any of these wild young fellows—I will.”

“Oh! thou treacherous monster!—thou base, deceiving wretch!” she exclaimed, every fibre quivering with indignation, “to lure me away from home, with promises of parental protection—to wind yourself into my confidence and esteem—that you might insult and outrage me by a declaration like this. Away, if you would not drive me mad. Merciful Father!” she continued, stretching up her arms to the sky,

now covered with a thick, dark curtain of condensing mist, "why hast thou forsaken my desolate youth?"

"Well, I will leave you a while to think on the subject," said the wily Scotchman, quailing at the sight of her terrible despair. "You have no choice left, my dear; you have no friend in the world to whom you can apply for protection at this time but me—you have not. You are completely in my power, and I haven't taken all this pains for nothing. No power on earth, or in heaven, shall take you from my hands. I shall have the sweetest little wife in the world," cried the odious wretch, rubbing his hands and chuckling; "the sweetest little wife in the world, one of these days—I will."

Thus saying, he skulked into the cabin, secure of his prey, and gloating in fancy over the treasure he had betrayed into his power. Linda remained leaning against the slight railing that separated her from a watery grave, in a state of mind bordering on frenzy. She pressed both hands on her hot brow, terrified at the strange, dizzy, delirious sensations rushing through her brain. One fearful thought predominated over every other, that she was forsaken by God and man, and given over to desolation and misery. The boat gave a sudden wrench, that threw her backward against the door of her state-room; then there was a grinding sound against the banks, a violent gust of steam howling from the pipes, and all was still. The boat was moored for the night, for the river was wrapped in a mantle of impenetrable fog, and, after a short time, not a sound was heard, save the occasional cry of a night-bird wailing on the shore.

What slight, dark-clad figure is that, stealing down the damp, slippery steps, over the narrow, vibrating plank, then springing on the sandy bank? It glides through the fog with rapid motion, penetrates deeper and deeper into the woods, following the path dimly seen through the obscurity of the night. Alas! poor fugitive! what will become of thee,

guideless, homeless, and hopeless ; treachery behind thee, and darkness and unknown dangers before ?

“ Oh ! dreadful is this loneliness,” sighed Linda, pausing for breath, and leaning against a blasted pine, fit emblem of her blighted hopes, “ but more dreadful is the enemy from whom I fly. I shall perish here in the wild woods, and Roland will never know where to find my nameless grave, to shed one tear over her who died that she might remain true to him.” A flood of tears deluged her cheeks, and relieved the burning fever of her brain. She wept long and bitterly, and as she wept, a gentle feeling of submission to the Divine will stole into her heart, like a dove brooding over the billows. She felt willing to die. Young as she was, life had been full of trials. It would be sweet to meet her mother in heaven, and sweeter still to pillow her weary, aching head on the compassionate bosom of her Saviour and her God. Kneeling at the foot of that blasted pine, in that breathing solitude, that lone, damp, dreary spot, the young heiress, torn from every earthly stay, committed herself to Him whose eye pierces the mist-darkened forest, as well as the sun-lighted temple. She felt as if an angel came and ministered unto her, whispering peace to her sinking heart.

“ Why art thou cast down, O my soul !” she cried, rising from her knees, and renewing her solitary journey, “ and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope in God ; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” It was astonishing how texts of Scripture, learned in earliest childhood at her mother’s knee, stole on her memory like echoes of celestial voices, vocalizing the fearful solitude of those lone woods. She had escaped a doom far worse than death. God had sent up that mist from the bosom of the river that she might escape from the face of her enemy. Perchance he would raise up a friend to protect her by the wayside ; and she went on, knowing whither she went, the mist rolling before, like the

pillar of cloud that guarded the children of Israel in their weary pilgrimage.

She knew not the distance she had travelled, or the time that had elapsed; but she felt that her blistering feet could not bear her long, even the light bundle that hung on her arm weighed heavily on her weary frame. Was it a torch that gleamed through the fog, or did her blinded eyes deceive her? It grew brighter, till the mist reddened and dispersed around it, and she beheld a clearing in the woods. At first her dazzled sight could distinguish nothing but a broad blaze issuing from a cluster of pine knots, piled near a tall ancestral-looking tree; but the outlines of a human figure, seated against the trunk, so still and dark, it seemed a part of the bronze-coloured bark, soon came out in bold distinctness. It was a red-browed son of the wilderness, looking in the shadow of that aged tree like the lone representative of his ruined and fast-expiring race. The dog that slept at his feet, wakened by the stranger's footstep, leaped up and barked. The Indian grasped his rifle, and looked fiercely towards the intruder.

It was too late for flight. She had been seen, and she might as well think to escape the lightning's bolt as the fleet foot of the red man. A horrid vision of the scalping-knife and the burning stake passed before her, as, urged by desperation, she darted forward, and threw herself on her knees before the astonished Indian. Her bonnet, loosely confined by a knot of ribbons, fell back from her head, revealing her wildly luxuriant hair and alabaster forehead. She could not speak, but her clasped hands and pleading eyes were full of prayer and supplication.

"White stranger," said the Indian, in a deep, musical voice and true to the stoicism of his tribe, exhibiting no sign of wonder; "white stranger, how came you here, alone?"

A cry of joy issued from Linda's heart. He spoke her language. He could understand; he could answer her. His

voice had the tone of civilization. She even thought a gleam of kindness softened his small, glittering eye. Had she studied for years to indite an address of eloquence and power to move his compassion, she could not have uttered any thing more thrilling or persuasive, than the simple words that burst spontaneously from her lips:—

“Save me from the white man, or I perish.”

“Good!” ejaculated the Indian. “I will take care of the white maiden. Yonder is my cabin, but it is far from this spot. You are tired, and can walk no farther. But I will carry you, for my arm is strong.”

“I can walk,” said Linda, faintly, but she tottered as she spoke, and would have fallen to the earth, had not the friendly arm of the Indian sustained her. Raising her as lightly as he would an eagle’s feather, he shouldered his rifle on the other arm, whistled to his dog, and plunged into the woods.

Linda was so much exhausted in body and mind, that she was reduced to the helplessness of infancy, and lay against the shoulder of her dusky guide, scarcely conscious of the pillow on which she leaned. At length he stopped at the door of a log-cabin.

“Naimuna,” cried the Indian, lifting the latch. A woman seen by the light of the smouldering fire rose from a pile of bear-skins, and gazed with bewildered countenance on the fair, helpless burden he bore in his arms.

“Spread a blanket over the skins,” said he. “Lay it smooth, and let the white wanderer rest.”

As she sunk on her soft bed of furs, and felt the warmth of the fire, now replenished by fresh pine knots, penetrating her chilled and aching limbs, and was conscious, too, that one of her own sex, though of darker race, bent kindly over her, arranging a pillow for her weary head, she closed her eyes with a feeling of grateful security, and the “white wanderer” indeed found rest.

CHAPTER XV.

"NOT in her room!" exclaimed Mrs. Walton. "Have not seen her this morning! It is very strange."

"No, missus," said Nelly, "but here is a letter I found on the mantel-piece. It wan't there last night, and may be it is for you."

"'Tis mine," cried Robert, starting forward and snatching it with a shaking hand. Bursting open the seal, his eyes ran over a few lines, while his mother looked over his shoulder as he read. All at once he turned furiously round and grasped her by the shoulder.

"Mother, mother! this is your work. You have driven her away by your cruelty. You have made me a partner in your wickedness. You have destroyed us both." Thus saying, he rushed from the house, calling in a voice of thunder for his horse.

"Robert, Robert!" cried his mother, pursuing him to the door, "come back. What are you going to do? You know not where she is gone. Where's Mr. McCleod? I have not seen him either this morning. Vile wretches! they must have gone off together. Base hypocrites! I will have vengeance on them both. Robert, Robert!"

But Robert heeded her not. In a few moments he came thundering through the yard on his coal-black horse, the swiftest rider in the country, and as the loud cry of "Robert, Robert!" again issued from his mother's lips, he turned his head, shook his hand in defiance, and continued his headlong course. He saw the print of heavy hoofs in the wood-path, and was sure he was in the fugitive's track. Onward he went,

till the path was lost in the main-road, and, guided by the same prints, he dashed forward, without pausing even to wipe the sweat-drops from his brow. It was considered a day's journey by carriage to the landing-place, but the sun was still several hours from setting, when Robert arrived at the spot, his horse reeking with sweat and flecked with foam. The river was flowing calmly on, blue as the heavens it reflected, and nothing broke on the monotonous rippling of the waters but the strokes of a wood-cutter's axe, reverberating from the opposite bluff. He threw his bridle round a projecting branch, and leaping over intervening piles of wood, stood face to face with the wood-cutter.

"Has a boat passed to-day? Did you see a young lady at the landing this morning? Was there a red-haired gentleman with her?" were questions so rapidly put, that the man drew a long breath, before he attempted to answer.

"Yes—I saw a young lady riding behind a red-haired man, stop about here, early this morning; and there was a boat come along the very minute they got off the horse, and they were away down the river in a mighty hurry."

"Was she drest in black?"

"Yes—I believe so; and a mighty pretty young lady she was, though she looked sort of flustered; but as for the man, he was the ugliest fellow I ever sot eyes on."

"What was the name of the boat?"

"The Red Rover."

"When will another boat be here?"

"I don't know. Sometimes there's a heap of them all together as 'twere. Then, again, there ain't any for two or three days."

"I must get a passage immediately. I would give a kingdom, if I had it, for a glimpse of smoke on the river."

"You had better sit down on the wood-pile and watch. I think I hearn them say, there was one to be along 'fore night."

I know I've been chopping hard enough to have wood ready beforehand. They burn an amazing sight of wood on these steamboats." The wood-cutter resumed his axe, and again the opposite bluff reverberated with the sound.

Robert could not, would not sit down. He walked backward and forward, like a lion in a cage, sometimes stamping the ground impatiently, and looking fiercely up the river, as if he would have lashed its waves, like another Xerxes, in the impotence of his passion. At length, just as the sun was slowly dipping in the western horizon, the dark cloud was seen floating onward, for which his straining eyes had been so long looking—winged by steam, the motions of the vessel were almost as swift as his desires, and leading his weary horse, the being next to Linda he loved best on earth, he soon entered the boat that bore him in the wake of the fugitives.

"Is this a fast-sailing boat?" was the first question he asked, as exhausted from fatigue and want of food he reeled into a chair, as soon as he entered the cabin.

"Very," was the reply. "Don't you see, she's called the Mercury, on account of her speed?"

But fast as she sailed, her motions seemed slow to Robert's fiery spirit. It was a clear, brilliant night, and she pursued her way unimpeded only by occasional pauses, to take in freight of cotton bales, which came rolling down the wooden slides, like avalanches from the mountain slope. He slept only by feverish fits, and when the vessel shook and heaved, as the heavy masses tumbled against its sides, he would start up and rush on deck, forgetting on what element he was borne.

When, after sweeping through the bay, the boat landed at the wharf, he eagerly sought the name of Red Rover on the vessels moored there. "Here is the captain of the Red Rover, coming on board," remarked a passenger, as a gentleman en-

tered the social hall. Robert approached him, with an agitation that for a moment deprived him of the power of utterance.

"Was there a very young lady, dressed in mourning, a passenger in your boat yesterday?" asked he. "And was she accompanied by a gentleman with red hair?"

"Yes," answered the captain, looking compassionately on the pale face and quivering lip of the young man. "Are you her relative?"

"No matter what I am," answered he, impetuously. "But tell me where she is! I must see her."

"I am sorry for you," said the captain. "Nothing has ever occurred, since I have had the command of a boat, that gave me such deep distress. She was so young and lovely, and seemed so sad."

"In heaven's name, tell me what has happened?" cried Robert, grasping the captain's arm with a force that made it ache.

"Pray, be calm, sir, and I will give you all the particulars with which I am acquainted. The unfortunate young lady, to whom you allude was seen walking on the deck, with the gentleman who seemed to be her protector, till a late hour. What passed between them, I know not, but passionate tones were heard on both sides. She remained alone after the gentleman retired, and in the morning no trace of her was to be found. There is every reason to fear that she plunged into the river, and found a voluntary grave."

Robert kept his wild black eyes fastened on the captain's face, as with a feeling but deliberate manner, he related the melancholy facts; but, at the words a *voluntary grave*, relaxing his hold suddenly, he staggered back, and would have fallen, had not the captain sustained him in his arms. The eyes of the unhappy young man closed, and a stream of blood, welling from his lips, covered his neckcloth and vest with crimson stains. A scene of indescribable confusion ensued,

for the boat was crowded with people, who had entered from the wharf, to greet their friends, or to attend to subjects of business. By a fortunate coincidence, the first physician who was found, was the same who had attended Robert at Mr. Carleton's, and he recognised his former patient. It was with difficulty he stanchd the flowing blood, or roused him from the insensibility in which he had fallen. He saw it was a much more dangerous attack than the former one, and that his life hung on a frail dependence. Despatching a messenger to Mr. Carleton to inform him of the event, he walked by the side of the litter, on which the young man was slowly and gently borne, counting his faint and wavering pulse, fearful lest every beating should be the last. With what feelings Emily beheld the pale and blood-stained figure of Robert Graham, brought thus suddenly to her door, and heard the cause of his deadly hemorrhage, it would be difficult to describe. The captain of the Red Rover, who had assisted in bearing the litter, and who felt deeply interested in the fate of the young man, related to her the supposed death of the young girl, whom she identified at once as her childhood's friend. Emily loved Linda too truly, and had loved her too long, not to listen with agony to these details. Terrible must have been the trials that had driven her, in frenzy, to seek the grave of the suicide; and in the bitterness of her heart she prayed that retribution, Heaven's righteous retribution, might fall on the mercenary, arbitrary, and cruel woman, who had forced her to desperation.

"And is not that retribution already begun?" thought she, as she bent her weeping eyes on the almost lifeless form of Robert, on whose damp, white brow and ashy lips, death seemed to have set his signet-seal. "This blow will reach her heart, hard and stony as it is."

Mr. Carleton spoke of writing to Mrs. Walton, and informing her of the situation of her son.

"Oh, Edmund—I cannot bear the sight of that woman," replied Emily, shuddering. "She has destroyed my friend. She is not worthy to be treated as a mother. She has desecrated the sacred name."

"But still she is his mother; and the world might judge us harshly, Emily, if we suffered the son to die a lingering death in our own house, without warning her of his condition. Whatever may be her offences, and I believe them many, they will not absolve us from the performance of duty."

"You are right," sighed Emily. "You always are. But I feel as if those horrid white eyes would dry up my heart's blood. How can I receive as my guest the murderer of my friend?"

Mr. Carleton wrote, and Robert lingered day after day, in a faint and languishing state. Still the physician cherished hopes of his recovery, if he were permitted to remain in perfect quietude. Over the darkened chamber in which he lay brooded the stillness of death, interrupted only by those whispered accents and stilly steps that breathe and fall so gently round the bed of sickness.

One morning as Emily sat by the bedside, believing him asleep, he turned towards her, drew back the curtain and held out his feeble hand.

"You are very kind," said he, in a low voice. "Indeed, I wish you had been less tender of my life. I do not wish to live."

"You must not talk," replied Emily. "The doctor has forbidden the slightest exertion. Remain quiet a few days longer, and you will soon be well."

"Hark," cried Robert, a sudden fire kindling in his sunken eyes, "whose voice is that? Let her not come near me. I will not see her, I never will see her again. Away, and tell her so"

Emily started. She thought she distinguished the voice of

Mrs. Walton in the room below. If its tones had thrown Robert into such violent agitation, her presence would be still more dangerous, and, fearful of the consequences that might ensue if she were suffered to enter his room, she hastened down stairs, and met the step-mother of Linda in the act of ascending.

"Come in this room, madam," cried Emily, trying to hold down her swelling heart, "you cannot go up now."

"I want to go to my son," she exclaimed. "I must see him. I must see him immediately."

"Indeed you cannot, madam," replied Emily, in a more resolute tone. "The doctor has forbidden any one to approach him but those who nurse him. The slightest agitation would cost him his life."

"Who should nurse him but his own mother? Who shall keep me from my own son?" and she again turned towards the stairs.

"I, madam," said Emily, placing herself before the door, so as to impede her crossing the threshold. "Your son's life has been committed to my charge by a watchful physician, and I will not see it endangered. Robert himself has commissioned me to tell you that your presence would be insupportable to him."

It must be acknowledged that when Emily uttered the last words, she felt a kind of vindictive pleasure in wounding the pitiless woman where alone she was vulnerable. But she could not help softening a little when she saw her hard features working with anguish, and tears forcing their way through dry and withered channels.

"My son shall not die without my seeing him," she sobbed, while her body rocked to and fro like a pine-tree in the storm. "He never sent me such a cruel message. He shall not die," she continued in a fierce tone, looking hard and bitter at Emily. "He shall not die. His heart shall not break for

that wretched girl, who has caused us all such misery and ruin."

"Stop," cried Emily, her large, dark eyes flashing with indignation. "Dare not accuse that injured, innocent creature of your own crimes. You drove her by your unrelenting persecution from the home that should have been the shelter of her youth. You forced her to the desperate act of plunging into an element less cold than your own icy heart. But think not her spirit lies buried in her watery grave. No ! It stands before the bar of its Maker, ready to denounce you as a murderer, at the judgment day."

"Emily, Emily !" cried her husband, entering at this moment. "You know not what you say."

She was indeed excited beyond the power of self-control, but the loved voice of her husband subdued her at once.

"Let her not see him," she whispered, "he forbids it. It would kill him. Reason with her, Edmund, I cannot."

Mr. Carleton tried to follow Emily's advice, but Mrs. Walton was in no state to listen to reason. After suffering days of torturing anxiety at home, she had learned of Robert's route before the arrival of Mr. Carleton's letter, and commenced her journey. During her passage, she had heard of the reputed death of Linda, and the dangerous sickness of Robert, and the gnawings of a deathless worm began to eat into her heart. "Mother, mother ! this is your work," kept ringing in her ears. She felt the clenching hand upon her shoulder, the blazing eyes burning on her soul. She remembered, too, the words of Linda,—*"I would sooner exchange these sad-coloured robes for my grave-clothes, than put on the wedding finery you have purchased ;"* and conscience brought before her the image of that fair young form lying in the sad-coloured robes, which proved its grave-clothes, below the gurgling waters ; its beautiful ringlets matted with sand, and its cheeks empurpled by a death of violence.

"I must see my son," was the reiterated reply to all Mr. Carleton's persuasion and arguments; and pitying the wretched woman, he promised that she should see him when he slept, if she would refrain from any manifestation of feeling that might endanger his life. He urged her to seek rest and refreshment herself, for she was evidently exhausted for want of both.

It was not till hours after her arrival, that Mr. Carleton ventured to fulfil his promise, but Robert having fallen into a deep and tranquil sleep, the effect of an anodyne given to quiet his agitated nerves, he thought it the most favourable moment to admit her. Slowly and with trembling steps she approached the bed, on which the one idol of her soul lay extended, with a ghastly pallidness and corpse-like rigidity of attitude appalling to the eye. The loss of so much blood had given his complexion that cold, waxen appearance peculiar to the dead, and this pallor was mournfully contrasted by the heavy masses of black hair that fell back from his marble brow. The eyes from which the fiery soul was wont to sparkle and burn were peacefully closed; and as the long lashes swept the colourless cheeks, they shed over the whole countenance an air of gentleness and sadness inexpressibly touching. His pale hands were folded across his breast. It is no wonder his mother thought she was gazing on a corpse.

"He is dead!" she screamed, "he is dead!" and struggling with Mr. Carleton, she attempted to throw herself on his body. Awakened by the wild shriek from his death-like lethargy, Robert started, and tried to rise on his elbow.

"Oh, Robert! Robert!" she cried, breaking violently from Mr. Carleton's grasp, and sinking on her knees, she wrapped her arms round her son. "They tried to keep me from you. They would not let me come. But you live. I have found you, my son, my son! I never will leave you more."

"Away!" cried he, tossing his arms wildly above his head,

his eyes kindling with maniac frenzy. "You are no mother of mine. I disown you for ever. You made me what I am—your co-murderer and fellow-labourer in cruelty and guilt. I loved her, and would have saved her from myself, but you would not let me; you dragged me with you to the gulf of perdition; and when, through all eternity, I am sinking lower, and lower, and lower, I will cry into the ear of the Almighty, 'It was a mother's hand that plunged me here, a mother who cursed her son.'"

As with supernatural strength, Robert poured out this fearful denunciation, his mother's arms gradually relaxed their hold, her features began to writhe like a scroll in the flames, and she fell back in violent convulsions. The eyes of the young man followed while they bore her distorted figure from the apartment, then sinking back upon his pillow, the red stream forced from its natural channel by the strong hand of passion again oozed from his lips.

"This is dreadful," exclaimed the doctor, when, called to the bedside, he counted with anxious heart his patient's languid pulse. "My positive commands have been disobeyed, and I can no longer assume the responsibility of his life. Nothing short of a miracle can save him now."

"Have I killed her?" whispered Robert, opening his dim eyes.

"No, no, she is better. She is not in danger. Compose yourself. For Mrs. Carleton's sake, if not for your own. She is well nigh in a state of distraction herself."

Robert gave a faint pressure of the doctor's hand, in token of acquiescence, and once more all was quietude and stillness. Mrs. Walton, after passing from one terrible spasm to another, at length sunk into a comatose state, in which she lay for many hours. When roused from this torpor, she showed no consciousness of the past, and evinced no desire to be with her son. Whenever his name was mentioned, she was seized

with a nervous trembling, as if her fibres were still quivering from his filial curse. Emily, who could not help pitying the wretched woman, saw that every necessary care and attention were bestowed upon her, though her individual kindnesses were lavished upon Robert. Again the hopes of the physician revived, who, to guard his patient more effectually from intrusion, had taken up his abode at Mr. Carleton's, and slept in the same room.

There was another gentleman visiting at Mr. Carleton's, who manifested a deep and increasing interest in the young invalid. He was a clergyman of the name of Rayner, a disciple of Wesley, and imbued with all the fervour and zeal which characterize the sect to which he belonged. He had known Emily from childhood; and, being a particular friend of her father, was invited to make her house his home during a visit to the city. Emily felt as if she would have sunk under the cares and anxieties gathering over her, were it not for the pious counsels and sustaining prayers of this excellent man.

One night Robert awoke from a deep sleep, with a low murmuring in his ears. By the faint light of the lamp burning in a distant part of the room, he saw a figure kneeling near his bed-side, with head gently thrown back and hands clasped together, raised in the attitude of supplication.

"Father of mercies!" uttered a low, deep, solemn voice, "I ask not for this young man long life, but life for evermore." The lifted hands slowly drooped; the head bent forward and rested upon them; there was silence a few moments. "Oh! thou friend of sinners!" continued the voice; but now its deep tones faltered—"forgive his sins! Thou who didst hush the raging billows with thy divine breath, speak peace to this troubled heart, and make it a temple meet for thy glorious presence."

Again the bowed head leaned on the supporting hands, and

nothing broke the silence but the sighs of the suppliant, and the breathings of him for whom those prayers were offered. Robert lay, unwilling to break, by a word, the holy spell that bound his senses. The kneeling figure, but dimly seen by the twilight-rays of the distant lamp, with the long, dark hair meekly parted on the serene, religious brow—the low, solemn accents, breathing up fervent orisons for him, touched him with feelings never known before. All his past life, concentrated in one dark, stormy scene, rose before him with appalling distinctness. His prayerless, godless course, from his tyrannical selfish childhood, wild passionate youth, to the tempestuous morning of manhood, passed like the phantasmagoria of a dream before the awakening eye of conscience. Eternity, which always seemed a mighty shadow rolling at an immense distance, ever receding and often melting away in the mist of time, appeared a tremendous reality in the midst of vanishing shadows, on which was stamped, in blazing characters, the name of a forgotten God.

“You have prayed for me,” said he to the minister, extending his feeble hand. “Man of God, teach me to pray, for my soul is sick with the burden of its sins.”

The good and pious Rayner wept with joy as these words fell from the lips of the invalid. From that moment there was a sacred bond of sympathy between the two, that drew them closer and closer to each other, and many a scene passed within the walls of that sick chamber that the angels of heaven witnessed with rapture. A miracle, too, seemed wrought on the languishing frame of the young man. Youth, and a naturally powerful constitution, after struggling long with the debilitating influence of disease, were at last triumphant, and Robert rose from what was supposed his bed of death.

As soon as he was permitted to converse, he sent for his mother, and asked her forgiveness for his violence with the gentleness and humility of childhood. She appeared but lit-

tle moved. Indeed, her countenance had worn a stupid, apathetic look ever since it was seen writhing in those terrible convulsions. Her memory seemed shattered. If she wanted to recollect any thing, she would put her hand to her head and look round her with a bewildered air. The only wish she expressed was to be at home—a wish in which Robert united, as Mr. Rayner had promised to accompany him.

‘Leave me not,’ he cried; “friend of my soul, leave me not, lest, with returning health, passion resume its unhallowed influence over my heart. Remain with me till my now unsteady steps have learned to walk in the narrow path they have so lately entered. Every earthly hope is buried in the grave of Linda; but a holy flame is kindled from her ashes, that shall burn with undecaying fervour, till, through infinite mercy, I may meet her angel-spirit in the world above.”

CHAPTER XVI.

AND where is Roland Lee, the young and gallant pilot of the Belle Creole?

We will go back a little to record an incident which occurred to him the very evening he parted from Linda, at Mrs. Carleton's.

When he arrived at his own room, he found a note requesting him to repair to the Mansion House to meet an individual whose infirmities prevented him from calling on him. It was signed by the name of Hunly, a name strange to his ears; but he did not hesitate to comply with the invitation, and soon he was ushered into the chamber, where Mr. Hunly received him, reclining on a sofa, his hands and wrists bandaged with linen, and a swathing band, also passing over one eye, surrounded his head.

"One of the greatest privations I now suffer," said the gentleman, rising on his elbow and motioning Roland to a chair, "is my inability to offer my hand, in token of gratitude, to one who is the preserver of my life."

Roland recalled the moment when, passing the burning wreck of the Belle Creole, he had rescued a scalded, drowning, moaning being, and bore him in safety to the opposite shore, and he was able to identify the sufferer with the man before him.

"It is not until within a few days," continued Mr. Hunly, "that I have been in a situation to think clearly, so intense and unintermitted have been my sufferings. But I have now justified hopes of recovery, though I shall probably lose forever the use of my right eye and of my left hand. Had it not been for you, I should have lost life itself. I have been

inquiring for days after my deliverer, and it was not till this evening I learned where he was to be found."

Roland expressed the pleasure he felt in meeting with one who, he feared, had died in protracted agonies, in animated terms.

"I thank you, sir," said he, as if on him the obligation rested, "for remembering me, and making me so happy as to know that your life has been preserved; for, indeed, it is an unexpected happiness."

"I trust," said Mr. Hunly, his countenance, disfigured as it was, beaming with benevolent interest—"I hope you will not deem me actuated by impertinent curiosity, if I ask you whether you intend to continue in your present situation, and what your prospects and dependencies are?"

"I have nothing to depend upon but my own energies," replied Roland, the ingenuous blood rushing to his cheek and brow. "I love the water, and would have sought my fortune at sea, but I could not leave a widowed mother sorrowing at home. As the best substitute for the ocean, I have chosen the father of ancient waters as my theatre of action, and I hope yet," he added, with one of those smiles which gave such an irresistible charm to Roland's face—"I hope yet to tread one of its floating palaces with the step of a master."

"You mean the owner, as well as the master," said Mr. Hunly, raising himself to an upright position on the sofa.

"Yes, even that I aspire to, though it will probably be many years before my hopes are realized. But I am very young, and with youth, health, strength, and sanguine temperament and a buoyant spirit, I feel as if I had an inheritance direct from the Almighty, at compound interest, too, which will increase in value as time passes on."

"You have, young man," answered the invalid, with emphasis, "the best inheritance in the world. I had rather a son of mine, if I still possessed such a blessing, should start

in life with such a capital than the largest fortune of the South. But there was a young girl," he added, "who was your companion, in whom I felt deeply interested. Though I could not see in those hours of agony, there was something in the sweet, pitying tones of her voice that I never can forget. She tore her handkerchief and yours, too, in bandages, and bound up my bleeding hands with such a soft and gentle touch it seemed to mitigate my excruciating pangs. Is she your sister?"

"No, sir," replied Roland, his voice trembling with emotion; "she is one whom I was so blessed as to save from the wreck. Her father perished in the river after passing through the dreadful element of fire."

"Is she poor?"

"No, sir; a wealthy heiress."

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Hunly, with a pleasant smile. "I don't think she could give a better proof of her gratitude, than to give herself and fortune to her young preserver."

"I should scorn to take advantage of her gratitude, even if such a thing were possible," said Roland, with a dash of haughtiness in his manner, that did not lower him in Mr. Hunly's estimation.

"You are right—you are right," said Roland's new friend. "I like your spirit. But it seems to me, if I were a young heiress, I could give you myself and fortune, from a more powerful motive than gratitude, and feel that I was conferring no favour. But I do hope you will not scorn every offering made by a grateful heart, for I shall never be satisfied till I have done something for him who redeemed me from certain destruction, and lavished upon me those tender cares which were necessary for the continuance of my life."

"Do not, I entreat, sir, speak of repaying me for such an act. I should have been a monster if I could have suffered

a human being to perish, whom I had the power to relieve. I am more than repaid by the pleasure of this moment."

"But I am rich. I could almost do any thing for your advancement, without impoverishing myself."

"Thank you, a thousand times, sir, for the generous *wish*," cried Roland, involuntarily extending his hand, forgetting he could not grasp that of the invalid; "but let the *deeds* be mine."

"I reside on the banks of the Mississippi," said Mr. Hunly, after a pause. "You will find my direction on the card lying on the mantel-piece. Please take it, and put it in your pocket-book. And when you have leisure, you must come and see me. I wish I had a daughter for you, but as I have the misfortune to be a childless man, you must allow me to cherish a fatherly interest in your welfare. And when you see that sweet-voiced young lady, tell her the blessing of one who was ready to perish shall ever rest upon her."

Roland remained till a late hour, pleased with the frank and cordial manners of his new friend.

"Farewell, my young friend," said Mr. Hunly, when Roland rose to depart; "as soon as I am able to travel, I shall return to my plantation, where I hope soon to welcome you. In the mean time, if you should be in any sudden emergency, or require any assistance, call on my agent in New Orleans, whose name you will find on the back of my card. I feel an interest in you, beyond that inspired by personal obligation. I had one son, who, had he lived, would have been about your age. Had Heaven spared his life, and made him resembling you, my yearning heart would have asked no more. I cannot offer you this wounded hand, but take with you my grateful remembrance, my best wishes, and most fervent prayers."

As Roland, much moved, bade him farewell, and was about to close the door, Mr. Hunly called him once again.

"Don't forget my message to my sweet-voiced little nurse. I shall expect to see her by your side, one of these days, in your floating palace, on the father of ancient waters."

"May your words be prophetic!" said Roland, with a bright smile, and while returning to his lodgings, he repeated them again and again to himself, and the inspiration of hope gladdened his spirit and warmed his heart.

Behold him, at length, launched on the bosom of the noble stream to which his youthful eyes have long been turned! Though in a subordinate station, he wears that aspect of command which speaks the "right divine" to rule. Ladies, who have caught a glimpse of the young pilot, like to walk the hurricane deck, and many a bright glance is turned to the green-railed enclosure where he watches the guiding wheel. He always appears in the dress of a gentleman, and his looks and manners are those of Nature's noblemen. They do not know that youth, beauty, and wealth, wreathed in a beauteous garland, have twined around his heart involuntary folds, like the vine clinging to the protecting tree. They do not know that he is already the hero of a pure heart's history, and that a pair of eyes, bright as heaven's own gems, are lifted nightly to the sky, to worship, with oriental devotion, the star consecrated to his remembrance.

Full and high were the turbid waters of the Mississippi, and as the boat floated majestically on its surface, it seemed borne above the level of the surrounding country. At unequal distances from the shore, was seen the embankment or *levee*, still wearing a greenish hue, though no longer brilliant with the emerald green of summer. The meadows, too, so rich and luxuriant at an earlier season, still rolled in their grassy covering, while here and there a magnificent live-oak, clad in perennial verdure, relieved the continuity of the scene. It was picturesque, the sight of the horsemen and carriages, just seen winding along the road above the *levee*, like the heads

of the Forty Thieves, in the grand melo-dramatic spectacle taken from that dazzling creation of oriental genius, the Arabian Nights. Large sugar plantations stretched along the shore, and the long, stately, regular rows of cane, running perpendicular to the river, seemed to open and close, as the vessel glided swiftly by. Rising, like a lofty Egyptian obelisk, from the roof of a broad, low, white building, appeared the immense chimney of the sugar-house, from which volumes of wreathing smoke curled beautifully on the dark blue sky. The sons of the Granite Hills, who had never travelled in these regions, and beheld, for the first time, those double rows of snow-white cottages, with neat pillared porticoes, separated by grassy streets, shaded on either side by beautiful china-trees, would learn, with astonishment, that they were the dwellings of slaves, who they are too prone to believe are no better provided with a home than the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. In that neat embowered residence resides the overseer of the African labourers, who, with the eye of a task-master, directs their movements and portions out their food. But whose magnificent edifice is that, with white massy columns extending on every side, supporting a double piazza? This was the question that Roland asked, as his eye ran over the ample plantation and noble appurtenances, near which the princely structure rose. "It belonged to Mr. Hunly," was the answer; "a gentleman who came very near perishing in the wreck of the Belle Creole." Roland's heart swelled at the thought, that, under Providence, he had been the means of saving the master of this splendid habitation, that he might enjoy yet longer the blessings a bounteous Heaven had so liberally bestowed upon him. He gazed with additional interest on the scene. Through the open windows he could see the gorgeous folds of the crimson curtains, glimpses of the costly furniture, and rich wrought carpeting. But the most beautiful feature of the scene was the garden

fronting the mansion, with its enamelled plats and graceful terraces, surrounded by a snowy railing, whose architecture must have been directed by poetic taste. Stretching between this and the river, that here swept in a magnificent bend, was a green sward, ornamented by double avenues of pecan-trees, whose light, wind-swept branches interlaced each other, and imprisoned the sunbeams that played amidst the leaves. Reposing beneath the shade of the broad-spreading live-oaks, in the neighbouring meadows, lay the sleek, indolent-looking cattle, the domestic monarchs of the rural principality.

"Mr. Hunly," continued the gentleman who had first spoken to Roland, "is one of the noblest, most liberal-hearted men of the South. He is one of the kindest masters in the universe, and his slaves may well rise up and call him blessed, as I have no doubt they will on the last day. He makes no show of his generosity, but it flows in living streams, making glad the poor and needy in the reach of his influence."

"It would be a fine thing to be the son of such a man," thought Roland, remembering his parting words: "but I am glad to have the honour of calling him friend. Linda! will his prophecy indeed be fulfilled?"

Week after week passed away, and the Evening Star swept on her upward or downward course, and naught occurred worthy of record, till one morning, just after a brilliant sunrise, Roland again beheld the majestic dome of St. Charles and the lofty spire of St. Patrick rising on the eye, illumined with the rosy gold of morning, while interminable rows of buildings stretching below, looked like so many vassals waiting in attendant lines on these lordly and sun-clad potentates. Following the graceful bend of the river, which here curved in a *crescent* line, giving its name to the city located on its banks, the boat approached the wharf, where the representatives of earth's varying nations were promiscuously assembled. The animated and elastic-limbed Frenchman, the ruddy and

sturdy-framed Englishman, the sanguine Irishman, the phlegmatic and thoughtful German, the yellow-haired Scotchman, the dark-eyed Creole, and the ebon-skinned African, all mingled there, like the party-coloured leaves of an autumnal forest.

As Roland sprang on the wooden platform on which the oat was discharging its heavy freight, he was tempted to close his ears with his hands, to shut out the Babel sounds of so many different languages, assailing him on every side. He happened to stand near a very peculiar-looking man, whose characteristic traits were oblique glancing eyes, and fiery, bristling hair. Just at this moment, a newsboy came along with a large bundle of papers, on which the ink was scarcely dried. Roland purchased one of these, that he might have something to abstract his mind from the motley group around him. Carelessly opening the damp sheet, his eye glanced over the columns, when suddenly it was arrested, and his cheek and lips turned the hue of clay. Unconsciously grasping the arm of the stranger, he exclaimed, "Almighty Father! can this be true?"

The red-locked individual, whose eye had followed Roland's, and rested on the same article, struggled to release himself, looking from one side to the other in evident perturbation. "I know nothing about it, nothing at all," he cried; "why do you ask me? Very shocking thing, very shocking, indeed."

Roland noticed not, when the wily Scotchman, sliding from his hold, plunged into the thickest of the crowd. Still his glazed and burning eyes were fixed on that fatal paragraph, that seemed written in characters of fire. It referred to the mysterious disappearance and supposed death of a young lady on board the Red Rover, whose name was ascertained to be—Linda Walton. It described also the singular personal appearance of the gentleman who was her companion.

"It was he," exclaimed Roland. "It was he whose arm

I grasped ;” and darting like a madman into the midst of the throng, he looked on the right and the left for the red-haired stranger, who had eluded his grasp. In vain he pressed forward and sent his frenzied glances through that human forest, till, panting, suffocating, scarcely able to breathe, he rushed back to the boat, and shutting himself in his room, he locked the door and threw himself reeling on the bed. Long he lay in a state resembling stupefaction, stunned, benumbed by the suddenness of the blow ; but as the blood gradually receded from his hot and oppressed brain, and he was able to think of the intelligence that had threatened to dethrone his intellect, he could not, he would not believe it.

“No, no,” cried he, “she never would have destroyed herself. She loved me too well to inflict upon me such a bitter curse. This is rumour, falsehood. It is not, cannot be true. By the deathless love that burns in this throbbing heart,—by the hope that keeps me from perishing, I feel, I know she lives.”

But while he uttered these words, his clenching hands and scalding tears belied the truth of the asseveration. Yes ! the bold, brave Roland, smitten to the heart’s core, as the conviction forced itself upon him that she must be lost, gave way to a burst of anguish that shook the couch on which he lay, and convulsed his frame with ague-like paroxysms. All day he remained in his lonely berth, refusing to answer the knocks and calls at his door, for it seemed sacrilege to him for human eyes to see the depth of his sorrow. It was not until the next morning, when the voice of his captain called his name, in a clear, commanding accent, that he came forth, ready to take his station at the helm. The captain recoiled at the sight of his blood-shot eyes and ashy complexion.

“Roland Lee,” said he, taking his feverish hand ; “you are ill. Another must take your place at the helm.”

Roland bowed, pressed his hand, drew his hat over his eyes, and passed out in silence. In silence he sought his accustomed

position, and looking out once more on that dark element, the object of his boyish enthusiasm, cold shudders ran through his veins. Gracefully the Evening Star swept round the crescent arch, commencing her watery course, and beautifully the foam dashed against her sides : but Roland saw in every crested wave, only an image of the cold pall that mantled the bosom of Linda ; in the murmuring of the waters, he heard nothing but her dirge, and where, a short time before, he had witnessed beauty and magnificence, he now beheld naught but desolation and death.

“ I cannot give thee up, my beloved,” he cried, in sad communings with his own spirit. “ I will seek thee in the waters, I will seek thee in the wilderness, nor resign thee till I find thou hast made thy grave beneath the cold dashing of the one or the falling leaves of the other.”

CHAPTER XVII.

LINDA not only found rest, but comfort and kindness in the cabin of her Indian friends. Tuscarora, her nocturnal guide, and Naimuna his wife, were both civilized. In his youth he attended school with the sons of the white men, and was taught to worship the God of the Bible, but he could not subdue his love for the free, roving life of the Indian: He returned to the wilderness, accompanied by a young wife, who panted like him for a home in the forest, where she could live unfettered by the artificial restraints of civilized life. But they were known and respected by the white race. The hunter, weary from the chase, loved to rest in the cottage of Tuscarora. The wanderer sought refuge under his roof, secure of a welcome and a shelter, and the youth who wanted to learn the

track of the deer, or the place where the wild turkeys hid, was sure to ask the services of the friendly Indian.

Linda was ushered into a more comfortable apartment than the one where she was laid on her bed of furs.

"You were cold and faint," said Naimuna, "and we feared to put you where there was no fire to warm you. You looked so pale and white, I counted your pulse while you slept, to see if there was life in your veins. Ah! you must have suffered much, to be alone in the woods, at the dark hour when you met Tuscarora."

"I have indeed suffered much," answered Linda, shuddering; "and had it not been for your husband, I should have perished in the woods."

"You have no mother," said the gentle Indian, "or you would not have been left to wander."

"Alas—no! I have neither father nor mother, and they who should protect me have driven me from my home. Think not evil of me, kind woman, because I came here a friendless wanderer. I fled from one,"—here her languid eyes kindled and her cheek glowed,—"one, who promised to guard me, but who proved false to his trust. Now, that I can reflect calmly on what I might have done, I know I could have sought the protection of the captain in whose boat we sailed, and I would have been safe, but I was wild with terror, and thought only of escaping from the place where he breathed. I have friends who would seek me at their life's peril, did they know where I am, but when will they find me, and how shall I make known to them the place of my refuge?"

"Remain with us," said Naimuna, "till they learn you are in the home of Tuscarora. You shall sleep in this room on a bed of moss, and I will wait upon you and wash your linen in the clear water of the spring. Tuscarora has fleet horses that can carry letters to your friends. There isn't a path from here to the great river that his foot has not trod."

"You are kind, you are good," cried Linda, pressing the dark hand of the Indian in hers, and fixing her eyes, moistened with tears of gratitude, on her mild and pensive features. "I know you do not deceive me, as others have done. I was on my way to the great river, for my kindred live upon its shores. If Tuscarora can help me on my journey, he shall find that I not only have the will but the power to reward him."

"Tuscarora would ask no reward," replied Naimuna; "he has studied the great book of the white man, and loves to do good, because it makes his heart feel warm and light in his bosom."

"Oh, warm and light must be his heart this morning!" exclaimed Linda. The stately tread of Tuscarora was now heard in the cabin, and with feelings of the deepest respect, as well as gratitude, she greeted the Christian Indian.

He was clad in the usual garb of a hunter, and instead of the single, gallant scalp-lock which distinguished the warlike chief of the red men, his long black hair, glossy and unshorn, softened the stern outline of a face marked with the peculiar lineaments of his race. The independent spirit of the wilderness, untamed by the restraints of his boyish years, shone from his quick-glancing eye, but the expression of placid melancholy lingering round the mouth reminded one of the wrongs and degradation of his once lordly nation. He was one of that small number who have acquired the virtues of the white man without his vices, for he looked upon strong drink with horror, and the simple word of Tuscarora was equivalent to a bond.

When Linda told him of the locality of her Louisianian home and her anxiety to reach it, she was astonished at the map-like distinctness with which the course was marked on his memory. He knew the winding of every stream, the path through every wood, every place where the traveller could find nightly rest; in short, with a guide like him, Linda thought

every rough place would be made smooth, and every intricate one clear. But she dared not ask a favour so immense, for there was something in his majestic demeanor that forbade her from offering a pecuniary return. Tuscarora's penetrating eye interpreted her anxious and embarrassed countenance.

"I will guide you to your friends," said he, with dignity, "when you have rested awhile with Naimuna. I have horses as fleet as the wind and gentle as the moon. If the white stranger is accustomed to the bridle and the rein, she will be as safe on the steeds of Tuscarora as when rocked by the breezes to sleep."

"How shall I thank you for your generous offer?" asked Linda, charmed with the metaphorical language of the Indian. "How can I make such a demand on your time? and how can Naimuna be left so long alone?"

Tuscarora smiled. "The wife of a hunter fears not a lonely hearth. I have business myself where the Red River pours its waters into the Mississippi, and if the white stranger did not accompany me, I should traverse the woods and the hills alone. We shall have no rain to delay us, for when the moon was no larger than a silver bow it hung drooping in the sky, and the horn of the hunter could not rest upon its curve. It is now large and round, and will light us on our journey."

"Oh, then let us start to-morrow," cried Linda, "for here I dread pursuit. The rustling of the leaves make me tremble. The sudden barking of the dog causes my heart to stand still."

"You are safe with Tuscarora wherever you are," answered the Indian, proudly. "The white man lives not who could stand the stroke of this arm, when raised in defence of the weak. But I must first go to the city; and it will take the time between the rising and setting of two suns to go and return. I must provide for Naimuna during my absence, and the white stranger must have a saddle to cradle her, before she mounts the hunter's steed."

Linda started. She could accompany him to Mobile. She could place herself under the protection of Mr. Carleton and Emily, and thus escape a long and perilous journey. But would she be safe there? No. Robert and her step-mother would pursue her there, and perhaps the terrible Scotchman. She dared not hazard it. Better to brave unknown dangers, than expose herself again to those she had already suffered so much to avoid. She regretted the necessity of delay, but felt that it was in vain to repine. She could not, however, allow Tuscarora to incur an actual expense for her accommodation, as her purse was still in her possession; being in the bundle she had sufficient presence of mind to bear away in her flight. Blushing, she placed it in his hand, and requested him to purchase whatever was necessary for their journey.

"It is well," said he, with grave dignity. "I have furs sufficient to purchase all, but I will not refuse the request of the maiden."

He left the cabin, and in a few moments he appeared mounted on a shining bay-horse, whose flowing mane and long sweeping tail had never been shorn of their native luxuriance. Swift as an arrow from his own bow, he darted from her sight, and the trees of the forest concealed his erect and stately figure. Thanks to the instructions of Robert, Linda was a dauntless horsewoman, or she would have trembled at the thought of the equestrian journey before her. Her heart sunk at the certainty of passing two days in her present situation, though the kind Naimuna did all she could to "cheer her pensive guest." She fulfilled her promise, and washed her travel-soiled garments, and made them as white and smooth as if they came from the hands of an experienced laundress. When night came, and the pine-knots blazed in the chimney, Linda, remembering the terrors of the preceding night, sat pale and trembling, filled with indefinite alarm.

"Be not afraid," said Naimuna, "no one would dare to

molest the cabin of Tuscarora, and if they dared they would not wish to do it, for he is kind to all, and who would wish to harm the poor man's friend?"

Linda tried to smile, but her eyes filled with tears, and she drew her ringlets over them to hide them from the gentle savage.

"Let me brush these beautiful locks," said Naimuna, taking Linda's brush that lay upon the table, and passing it softly over her drooping head. "When Tuscarora is weary from the chase, he loves to have me comb his long black hair, for it makes sleep come down on his eyelids."

Linda assented by another tearful smile, and Naimuna, kneeling on a low seat, began to smooth the soft tresses of golden brown, and twist them in shining coils round her tawny fingers. Seen by the ruddy light that illumined every chink and corner of that log-cabin, they would have made a beautiful subject for the painter's canvas. The hair and eyes of Naimuna were of gipsy blackness, and round the former was twisted a kerchief dyed with those brilliant colours which the children of the forest love to gaze upon. Her smooth, bronze cheek almost touched the alabaster brow of Linda, whose eyes, half-veiled by their long lashes, and surcharged with mournful memories, were fixed upon the blaze. Her mourning dress was exchanged for a white night-wrapper, which falling loosely from her neck revealed its unsunned snow. Her fair hands were clasped over her knees, and nothing could be more child-like and graceful than the listlessness and abandonment of her attitude. As Naimuna continued to furnish her thick, clustering hair, her senses yielded to the soothing influence of the gentle passes, and her eyes gradually closing, her head bent lower and lower, till it rested on the shoulder of the Indian. Naimuna looked down upon her, as she lay like a weary child slumbering on its nurse's arm, with feelings resembling worship. She longed to kiss the rosy lips

whose pure breath stole so softly over her cheek, but there was such an angelic innocence diffused over her face that she would have deemed it profanation in one of darker hue to approach them. Long she remained in her kneeling position, unwilling to move, lest she should disturb the slumbers she loved to watch, when, by an involuntary movement, she startled the sleeper, who lifted her head and looked round her with a wild and frightened expression. When she realized the kindness that had pillowed and guarded her sleep, she said :

"Forgive me for having wearied you so much. I did not know that I was falling asleep, or I should have sought my bed."

"I never should be weary while you rested on me," replied Naimuna. "I have been thinking, and wondering how any one could be so cruel as to grieve you, and make you a wanderer here."

"Some have been cruel in their hate, and others in their love," sighed Linda, "but I forgive them for both. Do you fear when Tuscarora is absent?"

"No," answered Naimuna, with a smile. "Why should I fear? I should not be safe in his presence if God did not take care of me."

The simple, confiding faith of the Indian rebuked the apprehensions of Linda, and, lying down on her mossy couch, she slept tranquilly till the breaking day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE morning arrived for Linda's departure. Tuscarora appeared, holding in each hand a bridle rein, which passed over the necks of two superb-looking animals—one, the noble bay which bore him to Mobile, the other a dappled gray, furnished with the side-saddle he had purchased for the "white stranger's" use. Tuscarora had told her to be ready by the time the shadows began to roll from the hills, and she rose by the light of the moon, so fearful was she of detaining her guide.

As Tuscarora stood between the two steeds, their long waving manes sweeping against him—his long, black hair flowing as free and luxuriant—there was something so commanding in his attitude, so striking in his appearance, Linda could not help gazing upon him with admiration. Proud of the guardianship he was about to assume, he had donned something of his aboriginal costume, which set off to great advantage his erect and symmetrical figure. A rich wampum girdle belted his waist, and moccasins, wrought with stained porcupine quills, encased his feet. A hunter's pouch, variegated with the same brilliant colours, swung from his shoulder, and in his left hand he grasped a rifle.

Linda stood on the threshold holding the hand of Naimuna, whose soft, black eyes were brimming with tears.

"You must come and live near me on the banks of the Mississippi," said Linda. "When I once find a home of my own, I want to gather round me all who love me and who have been kind. You have been more than kind, and for your sake I shall love the whole Indian race. Indeed, you must come to Louisiana. Tuscarora will find better hunt-

ing grounds, and, if you should ever be in sorrow, I could then repay, in some measure, the cares bestowed on me."

"If Tuscarora wills it, it would rejoice my heart," replied Naimuna. Tuscarora, who had listened in silence, now spoke, looking round on the woods and then upward to the sky: "I am willing—I care not where my cabin stands, if it is built in the midst of the woods, not far from the murmur of the waters; I care not for the boards that shelter me—I live in the house of the great God wherever I am. His house is very large, and there is room in it for the white man and the red man, too."

"We shall meet again, kind Naimuna," cried Linda, pressing her hand and turning to Tuscarora. He leaned his rifle against his horse, and lifted her lightly on his dappled gray.

"I will return, Naimuna, before another moon has filled her horn," said Tuscarora, looking back upon her as he wound into the path where the pine trees locked their branches.

Linda's spirits rose with the rising sun. Its rays came so cheerily through the dark, pillared aisles of the forest, and the clear, morning air blew so freely on her cheek, that the roses came back to it with the freshness of vernal bloom. She loved to ride on horseback; it had been one of the chief joys of her childhood to accompany Robert in his excursions about Pinegrove; but she never knew what riding was till she had mounted Tuscarora's dappled gray. It was, indeed, as he had described it, "swift as the wind and gentle as the moon."

"Surely I need not fear," thought she, glancing at her formidable-looking guide; "bold, indeed, must be the wretch who would attack one protected by such a guardian. *He* is no traitor. Such a noble, steadfast mien as that never was a cloak to treachery and deceit. I would almost as soon doubt the truth and excellence of Roland Lee as Tuscarora's."

Her thoughts went out into the future, and in imagina-

tion she built herself a beautiful home where the breezes of the great river could fan it, and she wandered in its bowers with Roland Lee by her side, the household god of her dwelling; and she erected a lonely cottage in the neighbouring woods, where the winds roared and murmured, and the voice of the waters made deep sounds in the night, where Tuscarora and Naimuna might revel in the freedom and exuberance of nature.

At noon, they rested near a welling spring, and, seated on a mossy rock by the side of a fallen pine, partook of the refreshments Naimuna had prepared. Never had Linda eaten with such a zest. The pure, bracing, odorous air of the pine woods gave a fine edge to appetite, and nothing could be more delicious than the cold water gushing, like liquid silver, through the fissure of the rock.

"I think I shall discard tables and chairs in future," exclaimed Linda, with a gay smile. "This old gray trunk looks so antique, and no velvet could be so rich as this cushion of moss. As for knives and forks, they are mere absurdities; and who wants a glass when sitting by such a spring as this?" And, bending from her rocky seat, she stooped to meet the gush of the rill, and drank freely as it flowed.

The Indian gazed with delight on his beautiful, young ward. He felt the charm of her innocent gayety the more, contrasting, as it did, with her former deep sadness. It showed, too, a confidence in his protection, which gratified his pride. He felt that he deserved it; but he had not expected such perfect reliance in one so young and sensitive.

"God is good," said he, looking round with a grave smile; "but they who dwell all the time in houses do not know how large the great Spirit is. They do not know how large their own spirits are. When I was a boy, I had to stay between brick walls and study my books, and they tried to make me think how much happier I was than if I were chasing the

deer in the woods, or hunting the birds on the wing. A white man took me from my father when he was sinking in the land of shadows, and said he would educate me as his own son. He was kind, and I loved him; but I pined for my forest home. I went to him, and said, 'You have taught me many grand and curious things, and I thank you. You have instructed me to look for a more glorious heaven than the hunting-grounds of my fathers; but I must go back to the woods, or I die. The streets are too narrow; the houses too high; let me go and worship my God in the wilderness.' The good man wept; but he suffered me to depart. He now sleeps the great sleep; but I sometimes travel far away to his grave, and, listening to the wind sighing through the long grass, think it is his spirit that calls me."

"You are grateful, Tuscarora," said Linda, listening with deepening interest to his grave and earnest discourse; "and you must let me be grateful, too. You must let me build you a house after your own model, and you must bring Naimuna and live in it, that I may see you and bless you all the days of my life."

"I have thought of removing to the shores of the great river, and Naimuna loves the white stranger."

Refreshed and inspirited, Linda continued her journey—her confidence in her Indian friend gathering strength with every sentiment he uttered. It was not till after the twilight began to fall that she became sensible of fatigue, and wished for a place of rest.

"A few more miles, and we shall stop for the night," said Tuscarora. "To-morrow we can ride into the moonlight."

As the shadows grew deeper, Linda thought she heard the sound of trampling hoofs behind. They gained upon her ear, and, looking round, she perceived a horseman directly in their track. She thought only of the detestable Scotchman, and urged her horse into a more rapid motion. But the faster

they went, the faster the horseman pursued, till, perfectly exhausted, she suffered the reins to fall loosely on the neck of the horse, which, becoming weary, immediately slackened its pace. The horseman fell into a slow pace also, as if determined to bear them company. She was ashamed to express her fears to Tuscarora, for it would imply a doubt of his protection, and she rode on in silence, though her hands were as chill as ice, and she could hardly retain the bridle in her grasp. In a short time, a bright light glimmered on the eye, and they found themselves near a log-cabin, whose white-washed walls and broad wings promised a neat and comfortable resting-place. Had it not been for the dreaded horseman in the rear, Linda's heart would have bounded with pleasure at the familiar sounds that greeted her ear. A negro was sitting under the kitchen porch, playing merrily on the fiddle, while half a dozen black children were dancing all over—the blaze of the pine knots illuminating the whole yard. One little negro girl, apart from the rest, all alone “in her glory,” was singing the popular African song—

“Snake make a hoe-cake,
Set a frog to mind it,” &c.

As the horses galloped into the yard, for Tuscarora loved to make an impression, the dancing and music ceased, and the children gathered to gaze upon the strangers. When the Indian lifted Linda from her saddle, she saw the stranger who had followed them dismount also, and her fears vanished, for he was tall and slender, and McCleod was short, with broad shoulders and sturdy limbs. With a joyous spring, she crossed the threshold, and entered the pine-lighted room. Untying her bonnet and shaking back her wind-blown tresses, she stood a moment by the blazing hearth, grateful and happy that she had not encountered the face of her enemy. A tall figure entered, but it was not the lofty form of Tuscarora. She looked, she shaded her brow with her hand, then spring

ing forward, caught the stranger by both hands, and exclaimed—"Mr. Longwood, my beloved instructor!" Her choking voice could not articulate another word. Overcome by ten thousand emotions, she wept; but, amidst fast falling tears, smiles of gladness shone like April sunbeams.

"*O puella pulcherrima,*" cried the well-known voice of Aristides; "and do I behold thee once again? But is this the little girl I have so often held on my knee, and whose childish eyes looked into my heart, while I talked to her of heavenly things? *Contremiseo tota mente, et omnibus artibus*—I am agitated in my whole mind and in every limb, as Cicero feelingly remarks."

He drew Linda where the full effulgence of the fire fell upon her person, and twinkling away the tears that gathered into his deep gray eyes, perused the features whose juvenile outline was drawn in such gentle characters on his memory. Linda retained, in a remarkable degree, that dove-like expression peculiar to childhood, and as her bright locks were still unshorn and unbraided, Aristides found no difficulty in identifying the lovely being before him with the little Linda of Pine Grove.

"How well you look!" cried Linda, observing with delight that his cheeks were less hollow, and his eyes less sunken, than when she saw him last. The hectic spot no longer burned on his face, and his frame indicated more strength by its more upright carriage.

"The Lord has been merciful to me," answered he. "I gained health in a milder clime; though for a long time I was *hastening to a land of darkness and the shadow of death*, as Job pathetically expresses it. Yet, even when I was sunk lowest in despondency and gloom, the pulse of life grew stronger, and the blood began to flow quicker through my veins. *Truly, the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun*, as Solomon pertinently observes. I rejoice that

I am permitted once more to behold thy face, *O virgo carissima*, else had I willingly laid down to rest in Cuba's wave-washed isle. *Sed omnes una manet nox, et calcanda semel via leti*—there remains a common night to all, and the way of death must by all be trod, as Horace beautifully remarks."

"But why have you not written to us, and told us that you lived, and that you had returned to your native soil?"

"I have written many times," replied Aristides, "but, receiving no answer, thought you had forgotten your old teacher. *Pulvis et umbra sumus*—we are dust and shade, as Horace sententiously observes; and I imagined that I had passed away from your memory, like the sand blown by the wind, or the cloud before the breath of morning. I would have visited the old log school-house, when two years ago I came back to my native land, but I was told you were in the stranger's home; and again I heard you were wedded to the wild boy who was the companion of your studies. But I find thee now, my dear little pupil that was, *pulchritudine eximia fœmina*—a woman of exquisite beauty, as Cicero gracefully expresses it. Whither art thou going, *O puella tenerrima*, far from the home of thy youth?"

This sudden question came home to the heart of Linda, and she turned away her head, unable to speak.

"Thou hast looked upon sorrow," said he, kindly taking her hand. "Thou art clad in a mourning garb."

"I will tell you all I have suffered—for I know you will sympathize and counsel me," said Linda; "but my Indian friend approaches. I will wait till we are again alone."

When Tuscarora entered, and beheld the white man seated by Linda with an air of affectionate familiarity, instead of looking upon him with the cold eye of a stranger, he walked straight forward and took him by the extended hand. "You are welcome," said Tuscarora. "It is long since I have seen my brother."

Linda learned with pleasure that Aristides and Tuscarora were known to each other, that they had hunted together in the woods, and that, a year before, he had passed weeks in the cabin of Naimuna. He found his health injured by the sedentary life he had led, and the physicians prescribing exercise in the open air, he had acquired an ardent love for hunting, strange as it may seem, and while roaming the woods he had come in contact with Tuscarora, whose character charmed his pure and simple tastes. Having received a legacy from an uncle who had lately died in Texas, he was no longer compelled to tax his mind for his support, and, free from anxiety with regard to the future, he was cultivating health and cheerfulness among the breezes of the South. Having arrived that morning at the cabin of Tuscarora, a short time after the travellers had left, and having learned from Naimuna the mission on which her husband was gone, he at once determined to follow. A beautiful, unprotected girl by the name of Linda, as described by Naimuna, awoke many memories in his heart. There might be others who bore the same name, but there was but one Linda to him, his sweet and unforgotten pupil.

After the travellers had partaken their supper, Tuscarora, with true delicacy of feeling, left the friends together, that they might speak unreservedly of the past.

Linda found she had a difficult task to perform. To justify herself in the eyes of her instructor for the apparently bold step she had taken, she must tell all her persecutions, her sufferings and fears. Aristides listened with unspeakable interest. He sat with his elbow resting on his knee, his head leaning on the hollow of his hand, and his gray eyes riveted on her face with a most intense expression. Every now and then he would lift his hands and ejaculate, "*Ah! virgo infelix!*" and dashing away a tear, resume his attitude of deep attention. But when she came to the base treachery of the Scotchman, his indignation knew no bounds. He started from

his chair, his slender frame vibrated, his eyes gleamed darkly from under his contracted brows—" *Oh, miseræ sortis*—oh, thou of unhappy fate!" he exclaimed; "to think of thy tender youth being exposed to such fearful trials! But 'God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' as the feeling Sterne hath uttered. His eye followed thee in the depth of the night-shades and the labyrinths of the forest. *O puella dulcissima*, my heart weeps over thy sorrows and thy injuries. *Dux fœmina facti*—a woman the leader of this deed. I remember her well. Her phrenological development was hideous—and cruel was the outline of her white brows."

The sympathy of Aristides was peculiarly grateful to Linda, as she had many misgivings as to the propriety of the steps she had taken in leaving the paternal roof. She sometimes feared that even Roland would condemn her, and look coldly on the wanderer, doomed to such strange vicissitudes, through what he might deem her rashness and imprudence. Had she known that Robert was prostrate on a bed of languishment, hovering between life and death in consequence of her flight, bitter indeed would have been her anguish and self-reproach. When she retired for the night, it was with feelings of heartfelt gratitude. She had advanced safely thus far on her way, she was blest with another protector, for Aristides had expressed his determination to accompany her to her journey's end. In her excitement at this unexpected meeting, she had forgotten her fatigue, and while preparing for rest, she warbled sweet snatches of songs, as she was wont to do in blither moments. As her own notes died softly away, she heard a kind of monotonous chanting in the yard, and, raising the window, she saw an old negro woman with a shawl pinned over her ears, sitting near the kitchen door, in the light of the fire, reeking backwards and forwards, singing in a broken, tremulous, but devout tone, the favourite hymn of the negro Christian. Many a time had Linda heard that hymn resounding

from her father's kitchen, and the sounds came to her like a dream of home :—

“Where's now the good old Daniel?

Where's now the good old Daniel?

He went up from the den of lions,

He went up from the den of lions,

Safely to the promised land;

There he'll sing and shout hosanna,

There he'll shout and sing for ever,

Safely in the promised land.”

Thus sung the ancient sybil, and went on with unwearied lungs through all the prophets and patriarchs, depositing them all safely in the promised land. The *good old Moses*, who went up from the *top of Nebo*—the *Hebrew children*, who went up from the *fiery furnace*—the *virgin Mary*, who went up from the *feet of Jesus*—were made to pass through the same process of singing and shouting for ever; and every time the burden of the hymn quivered on her tongue, the old negress shook all over with inward ecstasy and devotion. Who does not love to hear an African sing, has no music in his soul. Who does not love to hear from their lips the strains familiar to his childhood, when sitting under the stranger's roof, has no feeling in his heart. Linda had both music in her soul and feeling in her heart, and she leaned against the window, swimming on a tide of memory, till the songstress had disposed of all the Scripture worthies in that country of green fields and still waters for which the earth-worn pilgrim was doubtless panting.

With the dawn of day the travellers were on their journey, and Linda, now doubly guarded, went on her way rejoicing. They were passing through a monotonous country, and nothing occurred worthy to be recorded in the traveller's diary.

“Is it not mortifying,” said Linda, turning to Aristides, just as the sun was gilding the woods with his mellow, setting radiance, “that a young damsel, escorted by two such gallant

knights, should be permitted to travel in such unromantic safety? No adventure to excite, no danger to avoid!"

"I love to see that merry smile," replied he; "it reminds me of days that are past. But I sometimes feel as if, when the rays are softest and the air most serene, invisible perils were waiting to destroy. Let me not, however, bring a shadow over the sunshine of your brow, alas! too often clouded. *Te hilari animo esse valde me juvat*—that you are in gay spirits delights me, as Cicero pleasantly remarks."

"Hush!" exclaimed Tuscarora, catching the bridle of Linda so suddenly as to throw her horse back on its haunches. "Advance not another step, or you perish."

Scarcely had the words parted from his lips, when a girdled pine, whose tall, blasted trunk rose in melancholy majesty above its blackened and decaying roots, as if sustained by a single fibre, which suddenly snapped as the ground vibrated beneath the trampling hoofs, crashed, stooped, and fell directly in their path. There it lay, a gigantic ruin, its dry branches quivering like the limbs of a dying warrior struck down on the battle-field. Linda's nerveless hands dropped the reins, but the gentle gray attempted not to move. It seemed to be contemplating with astonishment and awe the sudden obstruction that impeded its way.

"I felt the shadow of this event coming across the setting sun," exclaimed Tuscarora, looking solemnly at the corpse of this monarch of the forest.

"*Pestis enim tacitus latet aspera sylvis*—a dreadful danger lies hidden in the silent woods, as Virgil prophetically hath said," remarked Aristides, the ruling passion still prevalent.

"How were you warned of the danger?" asked Linda of Tuscarora. "Had not your arm arrested me at the very moment, I should have been crushed under that fallen trunk."

"I saw the bark move over the wounded part, and knew it was the last struggle of life," answered the Indian "I've

noticed, too, that the aged tree waits till the sunset hour to lie down to rest. I was travelling once, and just as the last beam of day went out in the west, the breath of the Great Spirit mov'd over a dead pine, and it fell, crushing the horse that bore me. It struck me, too, and for the first time in his life the arm of Tuscarora was weak."

Thus saying, he bounded over the ruin, and his companions followed. They went on with quickened pace, but Linda gazed anxiously on every girdled trunk, and as the shades deepened, they appeared like threatening spectres frowning by the way-side. The imminent danger she had escaped sobered her feelings, and in proportion as her mind became less elastic, her body grew weary. The night air also waxed chill and damp, and as the moon did not rise till a late hour, she could not hope for its cheering light. She had heard Tuscarora say that they must make a long day's journey before they reached a shelter, and that it was a rough, uncultivated place. Once they passed an encampment in the woods, and brightly the great blaze kindled near the large covered wagons shone on the eyes of the travellers. Half a dozen white men and women were seated round the fire, looking as wild as gipsies; and twice as many children, black and white, mingled together, were scattered about in various picturesque attitudes, their faces all lit up with resplendent lustre, and their eyes shining out like so many stars. Linda looked at them with envy, so bright and comfortable they appeared, and the flavour of broiling bacon that greeted most fragrantly their olfactory nerves, reminded her that it was long since her usual supper hour, and that she was not only weary, but hungry.

"*Ubinam gentium sumus*—where on earth are we?" asked Aristides, when Tuscarora suddenly turned towards a low, dilapidated-looking hut, without shade or railing, and appearing perfectly uninhabited.

"We must stop here," replied the Indian, "or travel many

miles farther in darkness. Our young sister will be sick. She is not like the hunter that knows not fatigue, and can make his bed of his saddle. What ho, there!" cried he, giving a thundering knock at the door. "We want supper and lodgings for the night."

There was a lumbering, shuffling sound within. A gleam of light was seen through the crevices of the walls, for there were no glass windows to be illumined, and the door was opened by a surly, ill-dressed man, who was evidently just awakened from sleep. A very coarse, slovenly-looking woman, with short, tangled hair, was sitting on the side of the bed, and another man, dressed in a hunter's frock, by whose side a fierce, shaggy dog was crouching, lay extended on the hearth. Linda, trembling with disgust and terror, clung to the arm of Aristides.

"Let us not stay here," she whispered; "I am not so weary that I cannot ride much farther. The moon will rise soon. Let us go."

"If she don't want to stay, she needn't," grumbled the man; "but there ain't another house for twelve miles, and there's a big creek to cross, with a broken bridge. It's a mighty dangerous place."

"We will stay," said Tuscarora, "for the foot of the gray horse is lame. Have a fire kindled in the other room for the white stranger, and give her a bed to sleep on. We want supper, too, for we are hungry and would eat."

The woman got up with a sulky air, and taking a pine torch from the chimney, left the room. The man went towards the chimney, and pushing the hunter vigorously with his feet,

"Get up, you rascal," cried he, "and take your long legs out of the way. The young lady wants a seat by the fire."

The sleeping man, thus rudely roused, uttered a shocking oath, and, rubbing his eyes, glared them on Linda like a waking wolf. The dog, whose countenance was a fac-simile of

his master's, rose on his fore-paws, and began a fierce, low growl; but both master and dog retreated from the fire, leaving Linda and Aristides in possession of the hearth, through whose broken and irregular bricks the wind rushed, counteracting the warmth of the blaze. Aristides drew forward a rough, wooden bench, and Linda sunk upon it with a deadly sickness at the heart, that sent a cold moisture to her brow and a dim mist over her eyes. He beheld with the tenderest compassion her pallid face and drooping form, and bending down whispered words of cheer and consolation. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; 'he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,' as the Psalmist piously observes."

In the mean time, preparations for supper were going on in a style congenial to the appearance of the inmates of the habitation. The woman, who answered to the name of Dorcas, prepared the repast, such as it was, for there were no negroes belonging to the establishment. Linda would have given half her wealth to hear the notes, "Snake bake a hoe-cake," or the more solemn strains of "Good old Daniel," that greeted her ears the night before. When called to the table, she could not eat. Rashers of fat bacon, swimming in lard, broiled chicken, whose dying screeches seemed yet echoing through the yard, and pieces of burnt dough, constituted the supper. She drank a gourd of milk, but even that lost its relish from the dirty-looking, dingy, brown vessel which contained it.

"Our young sister," said Tuscarora—Linda was glad to hear him calling her by a more affectionate name than *the white stranger*—"our young sister does not eat. Her cheek is white, and I fear her heart is faint; she will be refreshed by sleep, and my brother also. I shall sit by the fire and think of their repose."

"There is no need of that," said the man; "you can have

my bed. Dorcas and I are going out in the shed. There is a plenty good place there."

"Where is the man who slept by the hearth with his dog?" asked the Indian.

"He's out in the shed, fast asleep agin, I warrant you," was the reply. "Little of a bed does he want. Why, he could sleep on the top of his rifle."

The women gave a hideous grin at these words, and, lighting a little, dingy candle, offered to show Linda to her room. With faltering voice, Linda bade her companions "good-night," and entered an apartment to which the dark, raftered room, where her step-mother once transferred her, was a palace.

"You can leave me," said she, mildly, seeing that Dorcas lingered in her room.

"That's a mighty fine watch!" said the woman, as Linda unwound the chain from her neck and laid it on the table. "There's a heap of gold in that 'ere chain, an't they?"

"No unusual quantity, I believe," replied Linda, and she could not forbear smiling at her look of stupid admiration.

"Them are mighty fine things, too," she added, as Linda unclasped the bracelets from her wrists. They were a gift from Emily. The watch was the last present her father bestowed. Precious to her were these mementos, and, though she had left all superfluous articles behind, she had not forgotten these tokens of love.

"You must be powerful rich," continued Dorcas, leaning her elbows on the table, then, squaring her broad chin on them, she stared up in Linda's face. "An't you got a heap of money with you? Where are you going to 'long with that big Injun and t'other odd-looking man?"

"I'm going a long journey; but I am very tired, and would thank you, if you please, to retire, and let me sleep. We must start very early in the morning."

"Well, I don't want to force my company on nobody,"

cried the woman, tossing her head. "I'm as good as some folks, for all their fine watches and clasps and rings. I don't want to stay here, gracious knows; but I'm waiting for the candle."

"I can put it out myself," said Linda, with unconscious haughtiness, for the coarse familiarity of the woman disgusted and offended her. The woman went out, slamming the door after her, and Linda, seeing there was no lock, placed the table against the door, and a small trunk which she found in the room upon the table, as a kind of barricade against intrusion.

"I will not undress," thought she, looking with a shudder on the comfortless bed, with its coarse woollen cover and brown sheets. "I will spread my shawl over the counterpane and lie down as I am. Oh! that the gentle Naimuna were near me, instead of this horrible woman!"

Thinking how the eyes of Dorcas had gloated on the watch and bracelets, she wound the chain of the one about her neck again, and clasped the other on her wrists. She might make an excuse to enter the room when she was asleep, and steal them from her. She would have left the candle burning, but it was a mere snuff, which would sink down, leaving an unpleasant odour. When she extinguished the light, she was glad to see the moonbeams streaming in through the apertures of the walls, making little silver bars on the opposite boards. She lay gazing on the white, glimmering lines till they seemed melting in one, and her eyes closed in sleep.

Long after midnight, she was awakened by some one opening her door very cautiously; but, cautious as the movements of the opener were, the weight against it made it grate very harshly on its hinges. Starting, she leaned forward, and saw by the flood of moonlight rushing in through the door, the figure of the hunter, who slept by the hearth, accompanied by the woman. The latter fumbled about the table, as if searching for something.

"She's hid 'em," whispered she to the man, "or may be

she's got them on agin. I see her put 'em here. But her money is in that bundle, I know."

The man here advanced to the bed, and met the gaze of Linda, whose eyes were fixed with that kind of fascination which draws the bird into the jaws of the serpent. But, as he came so near, the hot fumes of whisky burning in his breath were perceptible in the atmosphere. She sprang upon her feet with a wild and piercing shriek.

"Hollow again, and I'll dash out your brains against the wall," cried the man, in a low, harsh voice, grasping her arm with the force of a vice. "I want nothing but your watch and money. Give 'em to me, and go to the devil, for all I care."

Just as Linda was putting her trembling hands to her neck, in answer to the villain's threat, the inner door burst through with a loud crash, and Tuscarora, armed with his rifle, stood revealed in the moonlight. The wrath of the red man glittered in his eye.

"Dog of a white man!" cried Tuscarora. "Vile coward! I spit upon you." And, advancing, with one sweep of his powerful arm, he felled him to the floor. The hunter, who was strong and fierce, sprang up and seized the Indian by the throat, who grappled with him like a lion. The savage nature of Tuscarora triumphed in this strife, and, uttering one of those yells which make the terrible battle-cry of the Indian, he dashed his adversary against the wall, and planted his knee on his breast. Linda saw, but heard no more. Her senses forsook her under such an accumulation of horrors, and she was spared the deadly scene that ensued.

When she recovered, she found herself supported by Aristides, on the wooden bench by the hearth. Tuscarora stood opposite to her, leaning on his rifle. His face had a kind of earthly hue, his eye had the cold sparkle of steel, and his hands were reddened with blood.

"She revives," he uttered in a stern, hoarse voice. "Has my sister strength to ride?"

"Take me away from this dreadful place," she cried. "I can ride—I can walk—do any thing but stay here."

"Let my brother remain with her," said Tuscarora, "while I bring the horses to the door. There may be a gang of these wretches, who, snuffing the blood of their comrade, will come down upon us like wolves."

"Enter not into that room," cried Aristides, as Linda rose, to get her bonnet and shawl. "Tell me your wishes, and I will go—but turn not, look not there."

Linda had already looked, and her blood froze with horror. Stretched right across the opening, for Tuscarora had burst the door from its hinges, lay the body of the hunter, ghastly and rigid in death, his right hand grasping a thick tuft of the Indian's sable hair, and the floor around him smeared with gore. While gazing on this dreadful spectacle, Tuscarora entered with hurried step, and, bringing his rifle down with a thundering sound, exclaimed—

"Our horses are gone! That vile man and woman have stolen them and fled. My brother's alone is left."

Linda uttered a cry of anguish.

"Oh! let us fly," she cried, "from this house of blood!—I cannot stay in sight of that bleeding corpse!"

Tuscarora approached the bed, and, drawing off a dark counterpane, spread it like a pall over the stiffening body of the hunter. "We will cover the face of the dead," said he, "I destroyed the wolf to save my young sister from its fangs. I thirsted not for blood."

His face had lost its expression of savage ferocity, and melancholy was stamped upon its features.

"Hasten, my brother," said he, "and take her with you. Your horse will bear the burden of both. Follow the road that leads to the right, and seek shelter in the first house you

meet. Tell them a wretch, slain in defence of the weak, lies unburied in this hut, and they will send and cover him with earth. I shall follow the track of the robbers, and meet you when they have delivered up their prey."

Shouldering his rifle and tightening his wampum-belt, Tuscarora strode out of the cabin. Linda clung to Aristides, entreating him to depart, as if the *avenger of blood* were already at the door.

"Faster, faster," she cried, when they commenced their solitary ride. "Think not of me—I shall not be weary, though you go upon the wings of the wind."

Aristides spurred his horse; but it was one of those social animals that require the exhilaration of company, and its spirits drooped for the noble bay and the fleet-limbed gray. In vain the whip and the spur—it refused to go out of the moderate pace it had at first adopted.

"If Tuscarora does not overtake the robbers, we are undone," said Linda, in despairing accents; "and if he does, there will be more blood and death. Oh! that I had never left my home! Truly did my step-mother say that I carried disaster and ruin wherever I went. Rash, misjudging girl that I was; but I had no one to counsel me but my own weak heart."

The stifled sobs, which she tried in vain to suppress, almost broke the feeling heart of Aristides. He wanted to console her, but his own nerves were terribly shattered by the scene he had just witnessed. He had a woman's horror of blood; and yet, had not Tuscarora anticipated the deed, he would have rushed to the defence of Linda, and perilled his life to save her. He remembered what the man had said about the broken bridge and the swollen creek, and looked anxiously towards the moon, but it continued to shine with unclouded radiance high above the verge of the horizon.

"I hear the murmur of water," said Linda, after riding

what seemed to her an interminable distance. "I see its glimmer in the moonlight."

A sudden turning of the road brought them to the banks of the creek, whose ruined bridge, partly bright with silvery sheen, and partly black with contrasted shadows, in a calmer moment Linda would have contemplated with romantic interest. The current looked strong—the waters turbid. Linda shuddered at the thought of stemming the deep and angry tide. Aristides, too, paused on the brink, for he felt there was imminent danger of being carried down the stream.

"If there was a possibility of your passing the bridge," said he, "I could venture across myself and meet you on the opposite bank. *Nil desperandum*. God protects those he loves."

"Let me dismount and try the bridge," said Linda. "It almost reaches the opposite bank." In a moment her light figure was seen gliding along the ruinous-looking arch, and she soon reached the place where it had been broken by the rush of the waters. A rude railing had been constructed above a narrow plank, which rested on the naked pier, a frail footing-place, and Linda felt dizzy at the mere sight. How then could she venture to walk upon it with those dark waters dashing below? Still it was preferable to crossing it on horseback, for though one might be borne across in safety, she might by her presence endanger the life of Aristides, and drag him with her into a watery grave. Clinging to the railing that vibrated in her grasp, she stepped on the slippery plank, and without daring to cast one glance below, went on her perilous path.

Aristides beheld her suspended as it were in the blue ether and his heart almost ceased beating. He could scarcely see the plank that supported or the railing that guided, and so airy and spirit-like she looked, with rills of brightness flowing round her, he gazed as upon some supernatural vision. Just as she was about to plant a foot upon the pier, the plank

slided from its uncertain position, her robes fluttered a moment, and a plunging sound was heard in the stream. Aristides was conscious of nothing till he found himself buffeting the tide under the broken arch, and calling her name in accents that reverberated mournfully from the rocky banks. The current was strong, and several times he was drawn down in an opposite direction, but he struggled with an arm almost as resistless as Tuscarora's. He saw her rising above the waters, and stretching out her arms imploringly, but before he could reach her she again sunk, and her dark robes were undistinguishable in the stream over which the black shadows fell.

"God of mercy," he cried, "give me strength, give me strength to reach her. *Domine, Deus meus*—O Lord my God, hear me."

Once more her fair face emerged like a cold wintry star above the dark pall that mantled her form. With a strength that was given him from on high, Aristides beat back the eddying tide, and his arm surrounded her just as she was disappearing a second time from his sight. He felt her clinging to him, and the conviction that she was not dead gave new vigour to his frame. A few more wrestles with the stream, and the bank was reached. With a convulsive laugh he sunk down with his dripping burden.

"*Jubilate Deo!*" he exclaimed. "But what shall I do with thee, poor perishing child, drenched and chilled as thou art?"

Linda, motionless, but not entirely unconscious, lay on his arm, with a countenance so resembling death that he was wild with alarm. Kneeling over her, still supporting her with one arm, while he lifted the other hand to heaven, he cried with bitter anguish,—"*Miserere mei, Deus*—Lord, have pity upon me!"

Just as Linda, roused by these piteous cries, opened her eyes, and tried to assure him that she lived, a shout was heard from the bank they had left, and he heard the deep voice of Tuscarora calling his name. Aristides sent back a feeble answer,

for Le was exhausted by his unwonted efforts, but it was heard by the quick ear of the Indian, who, mounted on his noble bay, with the bridle of the dapple gray in his left hand, appeared in a moment swimming across the stream with his recovered treasures. The horse of Aristides, rejoicing in the return of its companions, true to its social principles, followed behind and joined his wearied master on the bank.

The snorting animals shook the water from their dripping manes, and stood with curving necks pawing the ground, as if proud of the feat they had accomplished.

"Why is my young sister lying here? And why is the voice of my brother like a sick man's?" said Tuscarora.

Aristides explained the danger Linda had incurred, accusing himself bitterly for having suggested such a perilous expedient as crossing the bridge.

"You saved me," said Linda, raising herself from his arm, "you saved me, best and kindest of friends; and you, too," taking the hand of Tuscarora, "you, too, have delivered me from death. Raise me, for I am strong. I never shall fear again, never, while my preservers are near."

She spoke in an excited tone, and her eyes had an unnatural brightness. "I am strong," she repeated, "very strong. Let us not linger here. Welcome, my gentle gray," patting his wet back. "I long to mount thee once more."

"My sister is not strong enough to ride alone," said Tuscarora, alarmed at the unnatural excitement of her manner, and cradling her on his left arm as if she were an infant, he mounted his horse, taking the bridle of the other, and bidding Aristides follow.

Linda made no resistance, and supported by the strong arm so lately reddened by blood, she felt buoyed up as if borne on wings. Notwithstanding her garments were saturated, and her hair drenched, her cheeks burned and her hands glowed with heat.

"Where did you overtake the robbers?" asked Aristides, "and did they yield without strife?"

"I tracked them deep in the woods. I followed the print of the horses' hoofs, and I would have known them if they had been among a thousand others. They had hid themselves in a dark thicket, but I found them as readily as in the blaze of day. I took the shawl of the woman, thick and strong as a blanket, and tearing it in pieces bound them both to the trunks of trees and left them. The man was a coward, and dared not fight. They cursed, but I answered not. I thank the Great Spirit that the blood of another wretch has not stained my hand."

Aristides looked wistfully ahead, to see if the wished-for haven was not in sight. He felt very cold and miserable, for he had not the iron constitution of Tuscarora, who revelled in the watery element, and minded the waves no more than so many dew-drops. It was not long before a house, very different from the one they had just deserted, greeted their eyes. The neat fence, the shaded yard, and comfortable out-houses promised comfort and rest within. The door was soon opened, and Tuscarora, having consigned Linda to the care of Aristides, entered first, that he might explain to the owner of the mansion the circumstances which brought them there. He soon returned, and ushered Linda into a nice and pleasant-looking apartment, on the hearth of which a fire was already sparkling. The master of the house, a gentleman of respectable appearance and kind countenance, welcomed them with cordiality; telling Linda that his wife would come as soon as she was dressed, and assist her in changing her wet garments. Linda smiled, and looked down upon her dress.

"I do not like to see her smile in that way," thought Aristides, and his heart ached from fear that her sufferings were not ended. There was a bright red spot on her cheeks and a lustre in her eyes that made her dazzlingly beautiful, and

her clinging raiment, displaying the exquisite outlines of her rounded form, did not disfigure her, as they would have done one of less symmetrical lineaments. Poor Aristides did indeed look most piteous. His long, slender limbs appeared twice as long and slender as they did before, and his hair, matted close to his head, however it might exhibit his phrenological development, deprived it of much of its intellectual dignity. As he sat by the fire, with his hands resting on his knees, gazing on Linda with a mournful, anxious expression, drops of water oozing occasionally down his cheeks, it must be acknowledged he presented rather a ludicrously melancholy appearance. The entrance of the landlady caused Linda to start forward, and with eager interest she perused her features, reading in every line kindness and benevolence.

"Bless me, my poor child," said she, laying her hand on Linda's damp shoulder. "You must not sit in these wet clothes. Come into my room, and let me get you warm and dry. But, mercy on me, what a hot hand is this!"

As Linda felt the kind hand on her shoulder, and heard the compassionate voice so soothingly addressing her, yielding to an irresistible attraction, she threw her arms round her neck, saying: "You will take care of me, will you not? You look kind and good. I think something dreadful must have happened, but I do not recollect what it is. I have a strange feeling here;" putting her hand to her head with a bewildered air. "My hair is too heavy, and presses too tight on my brow."

"Terror has touched her brain," said Tuscarora, answering the alarmed looks of the landlady. "There is fever in her veins. Let her drink of some cooling herb, and rest where your eye can watch her. No wonder the lamb should tremble, just escaped from the den of the wolf."

"Take care of him," cried Linda, looking back tenderly upon Aristides, as the landlady led her from the room. "And

tell him not to talk in Latin to-night. It will be bad for his head, after being in the water so long."

"Alas, alas!" said Aristides, wringing his hands, "she knows not what she utters."

"Sleep and that kind woman will restore her," answered Tuscarora. "I pray the God of the white man to deal gently with her, for she has been sorely tried. But she says right—take care of yourself, if you would still aid in protecting her."

While Aristides, tortured with anxiety for his beloved pupil, retired where dry garments and a warm bed awaited him, Tuscarora remained with the landlord, talking of the awful event which had just occurred. The latter promised to accompany him, as soon as the day, which was already beginning to streak the sky, was a little higher in the east, to the hovel where the body of the hunter lay, and with the assistance of some stout negroes, have it removed and buried. The wretches bound in the woods had probably released themselves by this time, and probably returned to their abode. The landlord spoke of this family as vile vagabonds, who were considered the pest and scourge of the country round, and looked upon the deed which Tuscarora had committed, in defence of injured innocence, as a blessing to mankind. The people who formerly resided at the hut, and who were known to Tuscarora as honest, though poor, had left the place since he had last travelled in this direction, and these new tenants taken possession.

The dignified and high-minded Indian would not knowingly have entered such a den of wickedness, or exposed Linda to horrors which had evidently shattered her reason.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT a different aspect Pine Grove now presents, from what it did six months ago !

The mistress who then presided with the iron will and the Median law, now sits a leaden ruin in the midst of her household, with drooping hands, half-powerless limbs and eyes, in whose stony orbs even the white heat of passion seems cold and extinguished.

Subject to those terrible paroxysms which had seized her at the bedside of her son, her powers of body and mind had gradually given way, till she exhibited the most melancholy spectacle in the universe—a mass of cold, deadened matter, in which the fire of passion and the light of mind no longer glowed.

Robert, with the bitterest remorse and deepest anguish, watched over the wreck which he believed his own unmastered passions had made. He remembered with shuddering emotions the denunciation he had uttered against her, and would have given worlds could he have seen her paralyzed mind awakened to a consciousness of her transgressions, so that he could bear her in the arms of faith and prayer to the feet of that Saviour on whose mercy he had cast his own sin-sick and burdened soul.

The poor negroes, who had so long trembled under her despotic sway, in whose ears the low sound of her monotonous voice was terrible as the hissing of the thunderbolt, who had been accustomed to obey the glance of her pale eye, as if it were the fiat of fate, looked with the same awe upon her hushed and passive state, as beings of old did, upon the muriatic pillar once known as Lot's wife.

The remembrance of her harshness and tyranny would

have prevented them from paying her those attentions her helpless condition demanded, had not Robert interposed the shield of his filial tenderness, and hallowed the object of his cares.

"Be kind to my mother for my sake," was his gentle admonition.

Was this the fiery and exciting Robert? Ah! religion transforms the lion into the lamb.

Robert was a devout enthusiast. Had he lived in the early days of Christianity, he would have gloried in the flames of martyrdom. He wished that his faith would expose him to persecution and shame, that he might testify like the saints of old his devotion to his divine Master. His soul was filled with a burning zeal, which must find objects on which to shed its consuming fires. He longed to devote himself to the missionary cause, feeling as if in no other situation he would be called upon to exercise the self-denial and humiliation he considered necessary for the chastening of his late proud and rebellious spirit.

When the good and pious Rayner suggested to him to be his companion in a journey, in which as a home missionary he was about to distribute the word of God to the destitute heathen of our own land, he eagerly consented. A wild hope, too, of learning something more definite of Linda's fate, quickened the pulsations of his being.

"If her ashes only rested on consecrated ground," thought he, "hallowed by Christian burial, and guarded by angel visitants, I would resign myself without a murmur to the will of God. If I could only find a place for my tears, they should soon cease to flow."

He would not have consented to leave his mother, but her dull, unspeculating eye showed no recognition of his presence. The physician said she might linger for years in the same condition, and Mr. Marshall offered to superintend the

family interests during Robert's absence. He even dispensed with the services of the faithful Judy, and sent her to take her former station as housekeeper at Pine Grove. Once more her white turban was seen in its towering aristocracy, shooting from apartment to apartment, heralded "by the jingling of keys and the turning of locks," and Dilsey and Minta, now full-grown and accomplished housemaids, became again her attendant satellites.

"What an awful judgment!" Judy would mutter, her eye fixed on the doomed mistress of the mansion. "The Lord has smitten her for the dreadful treatment of that poor, dear, sweet, darling young creature, whom she's just as good as murdered. Bless her little heart and soul. I sees her spirit every night, standing over poor, dead mistress' grave, looking so white and sorrowful, with beautiful wings on its shoulders. If it had not been for Master Robert—well—well! He's a Christian now. The Lord has forgiven him; and it won't do for poor nigger to be harder on him than the blessed Lord."

The night before his departure, Robert called the negroes together in the open yard, beneath the shadow of the household pines. It was the season of early spring, and the weather was as balmy and soft as its blending sunbeams and showers could make it.

Pine torches, blazing from the summit of the tri-footed pillars, mingled their ruddy beams with the pale lustre of a waxing moon, and in the double illumination rows of upturned ebony faces shone with a kind of dark splendour, rivalling the smoothness and brightness of marble.

"High above the rest, in shape and gesture
Proudly eminent"—

Aunt Judy's head-dress rose like a tower, on which the night-rays gathered in a radiant focus. Nor was she less distin-

guished for the superior solemnity and intelligence of her aspect, the devotional calmness of her attitude, the neatness and propriety of her attire.

Robert stood—his head uncovered, his long, black hair waving in the breeze, and his eyes beaming with supernatural radiance—before this humble and awe-struck assembly. He looked upon them no longer as brute hirelings, born to a state of subserviency and vassalage, but as immortal beings, children of the same Almighty Father, and heirs of the same glorious inheritance as himself. As such he addressed them : and though his language might be too highly wrought for their unlettered ears, the evidences of sincerity and feeling, the enthusiastic fervour of his looks and manner, touched the chords of their simple and confiding hearts. To think of Master Robert, once so vile and wicked, turning a preacher, to them it was a miracle indeed, and marvellous in their eyes. Some wept silently, others rocked to and fro, uttering low, suppressed groans, while a few ventured upon louder demonstrations of feeling, such as an occasional shout and wild exclamation. Judy had been listening with the most rapt attention, hardly daring to breathe, lest she should lose some expression which struck her with the force of inspiration, making warning gestures to the right and left, that she might insure the continuance of order and restraint ; but her emotions became at length too mighty for control. She saw the white tombstone of her departed mistress, cold and still, in the lonely little enclosure so near ; she saw, too, with her spirit's eye, the ghost of Linda, flitting through the silver-tinted shadows, and the voice of Master Robert was in her ears—that deep, impressive voice, talking, like a youthful St. Paul, of “ sin, righteousness, and judgment to come.” Judy could not bear such a weight of solemnities. Her excitement broke through all bounds. She rose from her seat, and, clapping her sable hands, shouted, “ Glory ! ” till myriad voices joined in the

chorus, and "Glory, glory!" resounded through the grove, and echoed through the distant woods.

Then the sweet and mellow voice of Rayner was heard swelling out in one of those monotonous, touching hymns, peculiar to the church to which he belonged; and, as the rude minstrels joined in the ever-recurring chorus, the vehemence of their feelings subsided into the hush that usually succeeds any stormy emotion.

Robert gave them an individual farewell, commending his mother to their watchfulness and kindness, promising them an abundant earthly reward on his return, and endless blessings hereafter, if they proved faithful to the trust imposed.

An hour afterwards, Robert stood alone beneath the two arching trees which was once the trysting-spot of his boyhood. His spirit rolled back on the waves of the past, with a swift, rushing motion; but every scene on the margin of those darkened waters rose as vividly before him as if his bodily eyes were gazing upon the reality.

Such was the phantasmagoria.

A rough, violent, mischief-loving, pampered boy of fourteen, and a sweet, gentle, dove-eyed child, on whose countenance the sixth beatitude was written in celestial characters.

A passionate, headstrong, despotic youth, and an innocent confiding, lovely maiden, shrinking from his wild, undisciplined love, pleading for protection, and pleading in vain.

A frenzied, heaven-defying man, madly pursuing the victim of his passion, reckless of man and God, and a lifeless form, wrapped in the winding-sheet of the waves—its requiem the murmur of the waters and the sighing of the winds.

A weeping penitent, a trembling believer, an humble Christian, and a young saint, redeemed and glorified, awaiting him in a brighter, fairer world.

As the last vision passed before him, Robert bowed his head, and, kneeling on a spot so sacred to memory, renewed

the solemn covenant made on the bed of sickness, to consecrate his whole being to the service of his Maker. There he knelt till, in the beautiful language of Scripture, "his head was wet with dew, and his locks were heavy with the drops of night."

The next morning, before the rising sun, he, with his evangelical companion, had commenced their long, equestrian journey through some of the wildest, most uncultivated regions of the Southern forests.

One night, after they had been travelling weeks, rejoicing in their labours of love, they stopped at a mansion whose exterior promised far better accommodations than any which they had seen in their rambles. The master of the house, whose name was Barlow, recognised the pious Rayner, and gave him and his young friend the most cordial and hospitable welcome. Mrs. Barlow was a kind and gentle lady, and looked with much interest on the pale and handsome features of Robert, saddened, as they were, by an expression of profound melancholy. After supper was over, and Rayner had consecrated the closing hour with prayer, she lingered as if she had something to communicate, and her eyes rested especially on Robert.

"Do you leave early in the morning?" she asked.

"Before the rising of the sun," he replied.

"We have a young invalid in the house," continued she, "who has been brought very low, even to the gates of the grave. For a long time she was deprived of her reason; but now, though still weak and languid, she can converse without injury. I am sure your presence will be a comfort to her, for it is seldom, in these forests, we are visited by the minister of God."

Robert's heart bounded wildly in his bosom. A young invalid, deprived of her reason—who could she be? But Mrs. Barlow's next words destroyed the illusion.

"She is an orphan, committed to my care, whose kindness to a dear and only daughter on her death-bed claims my everlasting gratitude. I will go and prepare her for your coming."

In a few moments she returned, and, bearing a lamp ushered the minister and his young neophyte to the apartment of the invalid.

"She is still too weak not to be agitated by the presence of strangers," said she, in a low voice, as she guided them through the passage. "Perhaps you had better not address her till your prayers have tranquillized her soul. Poor child! she has suffered a great deal."

She opened the door of a small, neatly-furnished apartment, and Robert entered a place that seemed to him holy ground—the sick-chamber of youth and innocence. The bed was shaded by white muslin curtains, which, hanging in full folds, concealed the youthful invalid, and Robert, with instinctive delicacy, drew back into the deepest shadow of the room, leaving to Rayner the office of the ministering angel, a deference due to his piety and superior age. Mrs. Barlow placed the lamp on a little table, on which an open Bible was already laid, and motioned Mr. Rayner to approach it.

Sweetly did his solemn, tender voice sound in that quiet, shaded room. He selected one of the divine minstrelsies of David, and, while his benign countenance was lighted with the glow of devotion, he breathed forth those heavenly strains which have been the consolation of the afflicted ever since the shepherd-monarch swept his consecrated lyre. Closing the sacred book, he rose, and, turning to Robert, who sat, with his brow leaning on his hand, far removed from the light of the lamp,

"Come, my young brother," said he, "let it be your office to intercede at the throne of grace in behalf of our sister—remembering her whom you have loved and lost, and who, you

humbly trust, is now a beatified spirit in heaven ; let your soul gush forth in melting petitions and prevailing supplications."

Robert advanced with slow steps, his tall figure towering above the lower stature of his companion, and, kneeling by the open Bible, the rays of the lamp fell brightly on his lifted brow. A rustling of the muslin curtains—a low, shivering sigh from the bed—strangely startled him. That sigh ran like electricity through his frame. He tried to lift his thoughts on high, and, raising his eyes and invoking head to heaven, exclaimed, in a deep, low, trembling voice, "Oh ! thou Father of mercies !" when a faint shriek from the bed arrested his accents. Mrs. Barlow sprang from her knees, and Robert, called back to earth, gazed in the direction of that thrilling cry. The curtain was drawn back—a face white as the folds from which it emerged was leaning forward from the pillow—while one hand was pushing wildly back a shower of bright, brown ringlets from the snowy brow.

"Linda ! Linda !" cried Robert, attempting to spring forward, but, staggering back, he fell insensible in the arms of Rayner. The good man hung over him in agony, trembling lest the red stream that had so often gushed forth from those veins of fire should crimson once more his pallid lips.

"Go to him, go to him," said Linda, faintly pushing Mrs. Barlow from her, to whom she had at first wildly clung ; "save him—he is my brother—let him not die, let him not die," she repeated, sinking back exhausted on her pillow.

Poor Mrs. Barlow was half distracted, not knowing on whom to lavish her cares ; but she obeyed the imploring eyes of Linda, and sought those restoratives her experience taught her would be efficacious for his recovery ; and Mr. Rayner had the unspeakable relief of seeing him restored to consciousness without the terrible hemorrhage he had so tremblingly anticipated.

With the rushing current of life came back the most bewildering remembrances. Was it a dream? Or had he been permitted a glimpse of another world? Those eyes, so soft, yet wild—so mournful, yet so sweet—had they only shot forth spirit-glances burning into his very soul.

“Have I seen her again?” he cried, raising his head from the supporting breast of Rayner; “or has she risen from the grave to mock me?”

“She lives, my son,” answered Rayner, laying his hand gently on Robert’s throbbing temples; “but let religion chasten your joy. Remember the Giver of so much happiness.”

The meeting between Robert and Linda was solemn and affecting. Restored to him, as it were, from the world of spirits, it seemed as if he saw her rising from the burying wave, where, in imagination, he had so long mourned her—so wan, so fair, so spiritual, he trembled as he gazed, lest she should melt from his sight, and leave him again to darkness and desolation. And Linda—the memory of that thrilling prayer—the kneeling attitude—the heavenward glance—the clasped and uplifted hands—the humble, supplicating accents—the devout, purified expression—filled her with mysterious awe. It was the face, the form of Robert, but animated by another soul.

“Linda, my beloved sister! I have mourned thee as dead,” exclaimed Robert, in a faltering voice.

Linda felt the tears of Robert moistening her cheek as he bent over her; she heard the gentle emphasis on the sweet name of sister, she met the softened glance of his once insufferable eyes, and she knew that the reign of passion was over. With a smile of ineffable joy and gratitude, she suffered her head to drop upon his breast, even as if she had found refuge in the arms of a brother.

“Robert—brother—friend,” she murmured, “I grieve that

I have given thee sorrow; but oh! I have suffered much myself."

Alarmed at the deadly pallor of her countenance, Mrs. Barlow here interposed, with maternal authority, and insisted that Linda should be left in quietude till the next morning, as she feared already the consequences of so much excitement. Rayner, too, noticed with anxiety the bloodless cheeks of Robert, and imposed upon him the same command.

It may be asked what peculiar claims Linda could offer for the gratitude of Mrs. Barlow?

When Linda found shelter under the roof of Mrs. Barlow, an incipient fever, the result of suffering, excitement, and exposure, was burning in her veins. She awoke the next morning in delirious agony, and for weeks she uttered nothing but wild and incoherent ravings.

In the aberrations of her intellect, there was still sufficient method for the listener to learn something of her past history. The relentless persecutions of her stepmother—the ungovernable passion of Robert—the treachery of the wily Scotchman—were at first the sole subjects of her wandering mind. But sometimes she was the inmate of Rose Bower, wandering in the oaken grove with her young companions, and revelling in all the free joys of childhood. Then she was watching by the couch of the dying Luta, standing over her early grave, and joining in the mournful hymn that hallowed her last repose.

"I would not live alway—I ask not to stay," warbled the sweet voice of Linda, unconscious that it was the mother of Luta who was bathing her burning temples, and ministering unto her sufferings, as she had once done to her child. Mrs. Barlow had felt her heart drawn towards her the first moment she saw her. Her youth, beauty, and helplessness, the singularity of her situation, the eccentricity of her white friend, the wild majesty of her Indian guide, all threw a kind of ro-

mance and mystery around her that was irresistibly attractive. But when she saw the name marked upon her apparel, a name Mrs. Reveire had so often mentioned in her letters, as the watching angel of her Luta, and heard her murmuring in such mournful, tender tones about her lost companion, she felt as if Providence had directed the young wanderer to her door, that she might repay a solemn debt of gratitude.

Tuscarora, convinced that it would be long before Linda would be able to continue her journey, went on alone to the "great river," for he remembered Naimuna in her solitary home, but he promised to return before two moons had waxed and waned, to learn of the welfare of his white sister.

But Aristides lingered near his beloved charge, doubly endeared to him by her misfortunes and danger. In the wildest wanderings of her intellect she seemed to have a vague recollection of his person and individualities, and often brought a tear to his eye, and a smile to the lips of others, by entreating him not to talk so much Latin, as it was very bad for both their heads.

Poor Aristides, who could talk only between inverted commas, forebore to speak at all, and would sit for hours in silent melancholy, listening to the unconscious expressions of a mind now like sweet bells jingled out of tune.

The recovery of her reason left her body in a weak and languishing state, requiring the most tender and assiduous care. Ah! Linda had indeed "cast her bread upon the waters," when she wilted the roses of her childhood over the couch of sickness in the bower where Luta bloomed and died. Little did she think the time would ever come, when she would owe the restoration of reason, health, and life itself, to the mother over whose anticipated sorrows she had so often wept.

When she awoke the morning after Robert's arrival, and recalled the events of the preceding evening, her heart was filled with inexpressible gratitude and tranquillity.

The incubus that had weighed upon her bosom like a mountain of lead was removed, and a feeling light as the flutterings of down supplied its place. Robert, whose love had been the terror and bane of her existence, whose image had always risen a dark and terrible shadow between her and all future felicity, she could now love as a brother, trust as a friend, and revere as a Christian. A change so mighty could only have been wrought by Divine power, and she dwelt upon it with adoring awe.

The peace of her mind diffused a sweet serenity over her countenance, and the warmth of her heart, whose best and purest affections were now awakened, sent a long-absent roseate tint to her pallid cheek. Mrs. Barlow burnished with all a mother's pride the "golden embrownment" of her hair, that beautiful hair, which, even in the worst stages of her delirium, she never could summon resolution to cut.

"When I bathe her head with cold water," she would reason, "her hair keeps the moisture, and cools the fever of her temples." So she continued to moisten and smooth her luxuriant ringlets, rescuing from sacrilegious touch nature's most beautiful ornament.

When Robert again met Linda; when he saw the sweet, confiding smile that played upon her lips, the endearing tenderness with which she extended both hands, and called him "Brother, her dear brother Robert," a faint, sick, dizzy feeling came over him. A stormy gust swept across his soul. It was the resurrection of passion—the awakening of the spirit's warfare. "I could resign her to the grave," thought he, "but can I to a living rival? O Thou," continued he, lifting his heart heavenward—"Thou who wast once tempted in the wilderness of life, leave me not to the power of my bosom enemies."

Linda watched the agitated features of Robert, and the smile forsook her lips. Yet it was not terror, but pity and

grief she felt, for his countenance expressed the most intense anguish.

"You have been ill, Robert," she said, gently pressing his trembling hand. "You are very, very pale, and your mother, Robert," added she, in a lower tone, as if fearful of breathing her name, "you have not spoken of her."

Then Robert, having mastered himself by a powerful effort, sat down by her side, and told her all that had happened during her absence, touching as lightly as possible on his own physical sufferings; and Linda's heart was tortured by self-reproach and remorse for the awful consequences of her flight. The powerless state to which her step-mother was reduced, a stony fixture in her own household, a cold, stiffening link between the living and the dead—a mere mockery of life, filled her with indescribable awe.

She thought of the solemn words of Scripture:—"Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord." She tried to soften the narration of her own sufferings, but the simple fact of McCleod's treachery was enough to excite the indignant spirit of Robert, and his eyes emitted rays of their former scorching fires. Anxious to change the current of his emotions, she described her noble Indian friend, his stern forest virtues softened and elevated by the influence of civilization and the heavenly spirit of the Christian religion. She dwelt on the lovely character of Naimuna, the parental kindness and ceaseless devotion of the good Aristides, the maternal tenderness and affectionate cares of Mrs. Barlow.

"When I look back upon the past," said she, "I see so much cause for gratitude and humility, I wonder I ever could distrust the guardian Providence, whose wings of love have brooded over me, like the down of the bird over her young. From what dangers have I been delivered! Through what trials been sustained! And now the first and warmest prayer of my life seems answered. I am assured of a brother's pro-

tection and care, where I have always yearned to find it. I am no longer desolate and alone."

All that was good and noble in Robert's regenerated nature responded to this trust.

"If I ever prove unworthy of this sacred confidence," cried e, "may I be forsaken by that merciful Being, to whose service I have consecrated myself, body and soul. For all past wrong, and strife, and passion, forgive me. For all future tenderness, brotherly kindness, and self-sacrificing devotion, believe and trust me; and the confidence, however unmerited, shall never be betrayed."

"Oh, Robert!" was all Linda could utter, but her tears were more eloquent than words. She was still too weak not to suffer from such an agitating interview, and it was several days before Robert was again admitted into her presence.

In the mean time Aristides, who had been absent, for the first time since Linda's illness, on an hunting excursion, (as his health had suffered from his long, anxious vigils,) returned, and was welcomed by Robert with affectionate respect. Aristides could scarcely recognise his former pupil, in the lofty, intellectual-looking, and remarkably handsome young man before him.

Alas for Linda! Alas for the shorn lamb, for whom God had so gently tempered the pitiless blast!—must she fall again into the hands of the wolf? Had all her perils and sufferings been in vain?

Robert read the suspicions that clouded his keen, gray eye, and he resented them not. He hastened to reassure him, by declaring it the solemn purpose of his soul, to assist in placing Linda with her friends, and to facilitate by every means in his power her union with Roland Lee.

Rayner, who felt it his duty to continue his missionary labours, bade a reluctant adieu to his interesting young friends, promising Robert to meet him at Pine Grove, as soon as his

mission was ended. All that was now wanting was the restoration of Linda's health, when she was to commence her journey anew, under the united guardianship of Robert and Aristides.

The time seemed rapidly approaching, as every day gave added strength and elasticity to her frame, and a rosier tint to the lilies of her cheek. Her confidence in Roland Lee had never wavered. He, too, probably believed the story of her death, but she knew she was not forgotten.

With a faith so strong, it had the confidence of certainty, she looked forward to a day of reunion, and as the star consecrated to his memory smiled upon her from the azure depths of night, it seemed like the star of the East, to go before her watching spirit, a herald of peace, and joy, and love.

CHAPTER XX.

LINDA once more a traveller!—Without following her equestrian journey, we will meet her on the banks of the Mississippi, where, with her two protectors, she is ready to embark in a new and splendid boat, that is ploughing, for the first time, the mighty bosom of the father of ancient waters.

As the stately vessel swept with a rapid and graceful circumvolution towards the landing, Linda's eyes, dazzled by the sunbeams sparkling on the waters, could not distinctly read the name of the virgin bark, but one by one the golden letters forming the fatal name of the *Belle Creole*, beamed in glittering characters on her sight. She turned of a deadly paleness, and grasped the arm of Robert with unconscious energy. There was something startling in this coincidence of names, and a strange hope thrilled through her heart.

"Who is the captain of this new boat?" asked Robert, interpreting the speaking glance of Linda.

"Captain Hunly," answered the gentleman whom he addressed.

The name of the pilot trembled on the lips of Linda, but she dared not ask so strange a question; and oppressed with mournful remembrances and agitating hopes, she walked in silence through the long and magnificently furnished cabin, to the one appropriated to the ladies' use.

Here a bright, smiling mulatto girl, anxious to do the honours of the boat, conducted her to a state-room, so elegantly adorned, it looked like a fashionable boudoir—expecting to be rewarded by some expression of wonder and delight, but the preoccupied Linda heeded not the decorations that surrounded her.

"I hope they have a careful pilot," said she, blushing at the little artifice she was using. "I was once on a boat which was blown up in a terrible manner, and it has made me very timid on the water. I hope," continued she, more earnestly, "that you have a good and experienced pilot."

"There's two of 'em," replied the girl, "and they've both been on the river long enough to know what they're about, as much as eight or ten years. There's one of 'em going along on deck now, with the green jacket on. T'other is a heap older than he."

Linda looked from the window, and saw a stout, weather-beaten, bronze-visaged man, who looked as if he had been exposed to many a warring wind and burning sun.

She compared him in imagination with the form of Roland Lee, graceful in youth and manly beauty, and turned away with a deep, quivering sigh.

"Oh! if you only seed the young captain," said the social mulatto; "he's the handsomest man you ever seed in your born days—and so grand, too, though he looks sorter sorry-

like ! He went in the small boat, t'other side of the river, when they stopped to take you in. He'll be back soon. You'd better look out, for 'twill be worth seeing, I can tell you."

Linda scarcely heard the words of her attendant, so deeply were her thoughts buried in the past. The girl, feeling her conversational powers somewhat slighted, left her to find more appreciating auditors ; and Linda gazed abroad with intense emotion on that glorious stream, which she had learned to associate with the image of Roland Lee.

Concealed by the drapery that shaded the window, she sat and looked on the glittering fleece of the water, the element that Roland loved, and over which her spirit, like the arkite dove, went forth with trembling wing in search of some green olive-leaf of hope in token of future joy.

A barge, rowed by four boatmen, was pushing from the opposite shore. A gentleman stood in the centre, and as the light vessel rocked to and fro, his figure inclined with a graceful motion, like a flexible tree, swaying in the wind. He was dressed in black, and a piece of black-crape, tied round his left arm, fluttered in the breeze. There was something in the attitude, the outlines of that erect, commanding figure, that made Linda bend forward with a more eager, intense gaze. She shaded her eyes with her hand, she passed her handkerchief over the glass to remove the mist of her panting breath. Nearer and nearer glided the barge, more and more distinct became the lineaments of that upright form.

There was a loud cheer from the deck of the Belle Creole, and the gentleman, lifting his hat and waving it in the air, stood with uncovered head, while the sunbeams, shining in their zenith glory, played brightly around his brow.

"Roland !" ejaculated Linda, sinking back in her chair. A mist darkened her sight. The sound of many waters seemed rushing in her ears.

She was roused by the cheerful voice of the mulatto girl—"Well, have you seed the captain?" asked she, putting her ivory teeth through the door—"but, gracious! how pale you be!"

Linda held out her hand for a glass of water, and as she rank, the mist passed away from her sight.

"They told me it was Captain Hunly," said she, abstractedly, "why should they deceive me?"

"La, no!" says the girl, "it's Captain Lee. I know how it happened. Mr. Hunly, who is mighty rich, and one of the best men that ever lived—and I ought to know, for he's my own blessed master—had the boat made, and he gin it himself to Captain Lee, 'cause he saved his life once. Nobody knowd any thing about it till the boat was all finished, and trimmed up beautifully; and then, master sent for the captain—Mr. Lee I believe 'twas then—and told him all about it. I hearn master say, he loves the young captain just as well as if he was his own son, and I don't wonder at it. He's a real, natoral born gentleman, and there's no lie about it."

The girl had no reason to complain now of the indifference of her auditor, though Linda startled and changed colour at every resounding tread. She knew that Robert and Roland must meet, and that the crisis of her destiny was at hand.

In the mean time, Robert, who was walking the deck, beheld the approach of the little boat, and recognised the form of his once-hated and condemned rival. Roland, too, recognised the features of Robert, and sternness settled on his brow. The remembrance of Linda rose darkly before him, at the sight of her supposed destroyer; and the young master of that magnificent boat, who was greeted with such enthusiastic cheers, entered it with a spirit goaded almost to madness by recollected insults and inexpressible wrongs.

They met face to face—these two young men—on the deck of the *Belle Creole*. The hot blood rushed with a crimson

glow to the face of Roland, but Robert remained colourless as marble. He was conscious of a noble purpose—and magnanimity is always calm. Advancing a few steps, and holding out his hand, he said, in a low voice :

“Captain Lee, I ask forgiveness for the past, and, if possible, confidence for the future.”

There was something so truthful and dignified in his manner, so simple and manly in his address, that it appealed powerfully to the ingenuous nature of Roland. He involuntarily extended his hand, but averted his face to conceal the moistened eye and quivering lip, which might expose him to a rival's pity.

“I have much that I wish to say,” said Robert. “Could I see you a few moments in private?”

Roland led the way in silence to his own apartment, where, closing the door, he turned towards Robert his agitated countenance.

“You wear the badge of mourning,” said Robert. “May I ask, if it is for one we both have loved these sable weeds are worn?”

“Stop,” exclaimed Roland; “my grief should be sacred from intrusion, and most of all from you. Have loved! Your words are mockery, sir.”

“I have much to say,” continued Robert; “but I tremble for the effect of my communication. Yet I know myself how much joy the human heart can bear.”

“Speak—quick, and tell me what you mean,” cried Roland, turning upon him with a flashing eye.

“What, if I should tell you, that she whom you mourn as dead still lives, and lives for you. Nay, stay and hear me, and believe me. I would not dare to trifle with your sorrow Linda lives, and, reserving only a brother's rights, I yield to you every claim upon her love.”

Roland gazed upon Robert for a moment, with a strange.

bewildered expression, then pressing both hands upon his forehead, turned of ashy paleness.

Fearful that he had been too abrupt in his communication, Robert laid his hand gently on his arm, and said :—

“Let me say to thee, my brother, as a holy friend did to me, when my soul fainted under the burden of its joy, let religion chasten thy felicity. Remember the great Giver of so much happiness.”

As Robert uttered these words in a calm, impressive voice, Roland's countenance lost its wild expression, his head gradually bent down, then throwing his arm round Robert's neck, he wept, even as passionate and tender woman weeps.

Robert's glistening eyes attested the depth of his sympathy. No feeling of jealousy now mingled its bitterness with the pure fountain of his thoughts. He found a noble, self-sacrificing spirit its own reward. The hour he had been so long dreading, as the test of his sincerity and truth, was come, and he had strength to yield Linda to another—nay, he felt a joy in the sacrifice, so pure and exalted, he would not have exchanged it for all that passion and self-indulgence in their most prodigal moods could offer.

And Roland and Linda met: but we will imitate the delicacy of Robert, and not intrude on the sacredness of the interview. It is difficult to describe joy, rising, Lazarus-like, from the tomb of despair. The artist can paint the black cloud of the gathering tempest, but when a glorious sun-burst comes flashing out from the gloom, he drops his pencil, conscious of the impotence of his genius,

“Unless to mortal it were given,
To dip his brush in dyes of heaven.”

The mulatto girl, who seemed to possess a kind of ubiquitous power, was not slow in discovering and communicating the interesting relation that existed between the young captain and the beautiful stranger. Having caught several disjointed

sentences, referring to his belief in her death, her vivid imagination filled up the hiatus, and she told, as a matter of fact, that the young lady had been buried alive, and stayed under ground ever so long, till the young man with the black hair and eyes went into her tomb and brought her back to life, and that it was she for whom the young captain was in mourning, and had been looking so mournful about.

It is not strange that, after such surprising rumours, Linda should be an object of peculiar interest and curiosity, or that when she appeared at table, escorted by Roland and Robert, followed by her tall, slender, remarkable-looking shadow, Aristides Longwood, every eye should be directed towards her, and ominous whispers be breathed from lip to lip.

The disappearance of the black crape from the arm of Roland, the radiant expression of joy that lighted up his countenance, the colour that flitted in rosy clouds over the cheeks of Linda, the downcast eyes veiled by their long, brown lashes, that shunned the gaze of all, corroborated the testimony of the mulatto.

Conscious that she was the focus of many a keen and scrutinizing glance, Linda was rejoiced when the moment arrived for withdrawing to the ladies' cabin, but she was totally unprepared for the astounding remarks that awaited her there.

"What an awful feeling it must be," exclaimed a cadaverous-looking lady, drawing her face down to twice its usual length, "to be put under ground, among coffins and dead men's bones!"

Linda looked up at this terrific speech, and fixed her wondering eyes upon the speaker.

"Isn't it a dreadful, horrible feeling?" asked the lady more directly.

"Indeed I know not," answered Linda, beginning to doubt the sanity of her neighbour.

"Then you were insensible all the time, were you, and die

not know when they took you out?" added she in a more funereal tone.

"I don't understand you, madam," answered Linda, now really terrified, drawing farther from her strange companion.

"I shouldn't think you would mind talking about it now," continued the inquisitor, following her to the other side of the cabin, whither she had retreated, "though it must have been awful at the time."

"What must have been awful?" repeated Linda, looking anxiously towards the door, with a look the woman thought supernatural.

"Why to be buried alive as you have been, to be sure," cried the lady, ending the sentence with a low groan.

Linda, uttering a faint scream, darted through the door so suddenly, that she almost overthrew poor Aristides, who was walking with measured steps the length of the cabin.

"*O puella carissima*," he exclaimed, gazing with alarm upon her terrified countenance, "what new misfortune has befallen thee?"

"Nothing," answered Linda, with more composure, "only there is a crazy woman in the cabin—I dare not stay with her."

Roland, who was on deck, heard the voice of Linda, and could not forbear approaching. He listened with astonishment to the cause of her agitation, assured that the evidences of insanity must have been as sudden as alarming.

"Oh, there she is!" exclaimed Linda, shrinking tremblingly behind her friends, "let her not see me."

A long, jaundiced face appeared through the folding-doors and a solemn hand beckoned the captain to approach.

Roland immediately advanced, notwithstanding Linda's low entreaties that he would beware.

"Captain," said the lady, in a suppressed, hollow voice, "you must look after that young woman. All is not right in

her brain," added she, touching her own forehead, "and it's no wonder, poor thing, since she's been buried alive."

Roland, shuddering at the appalling idea presented to his mind, no longer doubted that Linda's fears were legitimate, and knowing that insane people are always soothed by an apparent deference to their opinions, he assured her in all sincerity, that the young lady should be the object of his devoted care.

"Don't let her go too near the water," whispered she, "not long ago a young girl jumped overboard, who was not thought to be crazy at all. All they noticed was a wild look out of the eye, exactly like this poor thing."

Roland again thanked her for her friendly solicitude, and the good lady closed the door, after casting another commiserating glance at Linda.

"Anarcha," said Roland, to the mulatto, who, eager with curiosity, had joined the group, "take particular notice of that lady. She is evidently deranged, and should not be left alone, lest some accident befall her."

"Oh, mercy," cried Anarcha, "I would not stay with a crazy woman for ten thousand dollars. I would not go into that cabin again for this boat full of gold."

Linda, perceiving that Roland looked anxious and troubled in this new perplexity, tried to smile away her terrors, and proposed sitting on deck, where, gazing on the calm majesty of the waters, her feelings subsided into tranquillity.

Towards evening the mutual apprehensions of Linda and the lady died away, on the part of the former in the merriest laughter, for having mentioned to Anarcha the terrific questions that had so much alarmed her, the mulatto knew and acknowledged they were caused by the rumours she had circulated. She felt an unspeakable relief from the conviction that she was not obliged to wait upon a crazy woman, and that Linda knew nothing of the secrets of the tomb, for she could

not help feeling a superstitious awe of what she imagined the celestial brightness of her countenance.

That night a soft, deep mist arose, and veiled the bosom of the river. The boat rested on its anchor, and where its throes had lashed the waves to foam, all was stillness and gloom.

Long after other footsteps were silent, two figures slowly walked along the narrow deck. Their low voices mingled with the monotonous murmur of the river, and their glances meeting through the shadows of night, like stars dimly burning through the mist, thrilled each other's souls with mysterious rapture.

As Linda thus walked, encircled by the arm of Roland Lee, that brave and manly arm which had twice redeemed her young life from destruction, she felt that, to pass through existence thus protected and caressed, no dangers could intimidate, no perils alarm. Her heart ached from the fulness of its gratitude and felicity. The brightness of the present would have been too dazzling, were it not softened by the shadows of the past.

Hope, chastened by memory—memory, irradiated by hope.—two holy handmaids, stood at her side, blending in their aspects all that is precious on earth with all that is glorious in heaven.

CHAPTER XXI.

LINDA a bride. Let the imagination of the reader supply the links wanting in the chain of her history since she walked with Roland Lee in the soft mistiness of a vernal night, with the majestic Mississippi murmuring beneath, till the hour when, arrayed in the white robes of a bride, she stood hand in hand with him whom she had loved from childhood with a love as pure and constant as the flame that burned in Vesta's guarded temple.

Some of the most loved and honoured friends of her childhood and youth were gathered round her to sympathize in this most interesting moment of her life. If she cast her eyes on one side, they rested on the mild features of Mrs. Reveire, who had left the shades of her distant Rose Bower at the invitation of one of her best-beloved pupils. And seated near her was the widowed mother of Roland, her pale countenance lighted up with an expression of grateful happiness, and her eyes, beaming with all a mother's pride, fixed upon the face of her son.

On the other, was Emily, far more beautiful than ever, accompanied by her warm-hearted and high-minded husband. A little in the shade, but very near the young bride, appeared the figure of Aristides, whose gray eyes twinkled through the mist of excited feeling.

Partially concealed by the sheltering vines that clustered round the light verandah, were seen the stately form of the Indian Tuscarora and his gentle Naimuna.

Relieved by the green shadows that surrounded them, min-

gling in their attire the wild grace of the savage with the more refined taste of civilized life, these dark children of the forest formed a beautiful back-ground to the fairer group gathered nearer the fair, young bride. And behind these, as well as in every door of the apartment, appeared a darker shade of human countenances: the smiling, ivory-teethed Africans, proud of their sweet, young mistress and her noble-looking bridegroom; and Judy was there occupying a conspicuous station in advance, actually sobbing for joy, and wishing "her poor, dead mistress was alive to see this blessed day. As for old, new mistress, let her rest in her grave, if she could. If the Lord would forgive her, she would; but she didn't believe she ever could see the kingdom of heaven, such an awful great sinner she was."

But one of the most interesting figures occupied the most conspicuous place in the whole assembly. A young man stood in the centre of the apartment—an open Bible in his hand, ready to consecrate the nuptial rite, and, by the rising glow that mantled his pale cheek, the intense expression of his large, brilliant, black eye, it might be seen he was no uninterested actor in the marriage scene. It was the first time he had ever officiated at the hymeneal altar, and those who knew the history of the past gazed upon the youthful minister with no common emotion. And never was the marriage-ceremony performed with more feeling, fervour, and solemnity, than by Robert Graham. When his deep-toned and slightly faltering voice pronounced the benediction, Linda drew the folds of the bridal veil over her face to conceal her fast-falling tears. She thought less of her own happiness, than the sublime renunciation of Robert.

"Oh!" thought she, "what a glorious principle is faith, when it thus elevates and sustains the soul of man!"

After the first rush of congratulation was over, Aristides

approached his wedded pupil, and, taking her offered hand in his, began :

"*Oh ! uxor juvenissima, pulcherrima !*" his voice choked. In vain he endeavoured to clear away its huskiness ; tears blinded his eyes and impeded his utterance. He drew back, and the classic address was lost ; but the remembrance of his deep sensibility, his true affection, sunk in the heart of Linda more impressively than the eloquence of a Cicero would have done.

Near the close of the evening, Robert and the wedded pair, standing apart from the rest, spoke long and earnestly together.

"Remain with us, my brother," cried Roland, "and share our happy home."

"Leave us not yet, dear Robert," said the entreating voice of Linda ; "our happiness cannot be perfect without your participation."

"I have fulfilled my mission here," answered the young minister, "and holy duties call me hence. The home of joy and love needs not my ministrations. Where there is sorrow and darkness and sin, I go to bear the message of my divine Master."

"Oh ! Robert," cried Linda, "promise me, before we part, that we shall yet see you in a home of your own, where love and joy shall gild your days like ours. Let us not think of you as travelling alone through the darkest paths of life. I cannot be happy, Robert, unless I know you so."

"I am happy, my beloved sister," cried he, with an upward, beaming glance ; "but my happiness is not of this world. Never again will the flame of earthly love be kindled from the ashes of extinguished passion. To love you as a brother—pray for you as a Christian, looking forward to a more perfect communion in a holier world, will henceforth be

the chief joy and consolation of my lonely existence. Yes, Linda, you will still be the source of my earthly happiness ; but my hope and trust is in heaven."

He paused from deep emotion, and, turning away, his lofty figure disappeared beneath the green archway.

"Yes," said Linda to Roland, as their eyes pursued his retreating form, "he is, he will be happy. It would be sacrilege to pity him."

"Yet I am guilty of that sacrilege," replied Roland. "I must pity the one who, having loved thee, Linda, sees thee transferred to the bosom of another."

* * * * *

And Linda and Roland were happy.

In the overflowing gratitude of her heart, she had gathered around her beautiful home the friends and benefactors of her childhood and youth.

An apartment finished with classic taste, supplied with the finest authors of antiquity, and adorned with golden aphorisms, such as dignified the walls of the old log school-house, was set apart for Aristides Longwood.

A large and airy room, commanding a view of a magnificent plantation, stretching and rolling as far as the eye could reach, was appropriated to the grateful and munificent Hunly, who, though unable to be present at the marriage-feast of his young friends, visited them in the morning of their wedded life, and gazed with delight on the sweet face of her whose gentle voice had left such melodious echoes in his memory.

Then there was Mrs. Lee's room, Mrs. Reveire's room, and Emily's room, and Mrs. Barlow's room. Never did a young bride commence such a patriarchal establishment.

In a neat, white cabin, too, shaded by vines and shrubbery, and furnished with every comfort and many a luxury,—and

invested with all the privilege of freedom, performing only those labours of love that form a beautiful link between the master and mistress, and the slave liberated by grateful affection from the bondage which would impose an unwilling task,—resided our favourite Judy, absolute queen of the sable dominions.

And when Linda and Roland wandered, at the twilight hour, through the flower-margined avenues of their beautiful garden, and the fragrant orange groves that adorned their Southern home, they would turn aside to her cottage-door to greet with kindly words the old household friend. And Roland loved to listen to her eloquent memories of the past, for Linda always was associated with them as an angel of gladness, mercy, and love. There was but one forbidden theme: the cruelties and persecutions of her step-mother.

“She is dead,” Linda would say; “let her ashes rest in peace. Remember, too, she was the mother of Robert, and for his sake let the past be forgiven and forgotten.”

Another name she interdicted in her presence,—the abhorred name of McCleod. She knew nothing of his fate; she wished not to know.

“I am too happy,” she exclaimed, “to bear malice towards a human being.”

And there was another spot where they loved to wander, farther on in the shadows of the “grand old wood,” where the ancient waters lifted up their voices and the winds made anthems in the lone forest aisles, and that was the wigwam of Tuscarora, formed after the wild architecture of the savage, yet beautiful with all the comforts of civilized life, which Linda dared to offer to this independent son of the wilderness.

True to the promise made to his white sister during their memorable journey, the noble Indian accepted the home she had prepared, and made it a resting-spot in his wild and wandering life.

He loved to go forth to the hunting grounds, and, returning with the trophies of the chase, the shaggy skin of the bear, or the branching antlers of the deer, lay them at the feet of his benefactress.

Yes, Linda was happy.

The sequel to the history of "Linda," will be found in a work just published, uniform with this, under the title of "Robert Graham."

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